

The Politics of Neoliberalism in the Higher Education Sector in Bangladesh

Prepared by

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Dedications

I dedicate this study with respect and warm love to my parents

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Abbreviations

AIF	Academic Innovation Fund
AIUB	American International University of Bangladesh
BBA	Bachelor of Business Administration
BdREN	Bangladesh Research and Education Network
BNP	Bangladesh Nationalist Party
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
BSF	Bangladesh Student Federation
BSU	Bangladesh Student Union
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average
EKE	Education for the Knowledge Economy
ERHEC	Educational Research Human Ethics Committee
ESAF	Extended Structural Adjustment Facility
FSAC	Financial Sector Adjustment Credit
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HEQEP	Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project
IBA	Institute of Business Administration

ICT Information and Communication Technology

IDA International Development Association

IER Institute of Education and Research

IFIs International Financial Institutions

IMF International Monetary Fund

IT Information Technology

MBA Master of Business Administration

MIT Massachusetts Institute of Technology

MNCs Multinational Corporations

NCLB No Child Left Behind

NGO Non-government Organisation

OECD Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

PPP Public-Private Partnership

PSA Progressive Student Alliance

Pro-VC Pro-Vice Chancellor

RAB Rapid Action Battalion

RMG Readymade Garment

SAF Structural Adjustment Facility

SAPs Structural Adjustment Programmes/Policies

SOEs State-owned Enterprises

SPC Strategic Planning Committee

SPHE Strategic Plan for Higher Education

SSF Socialist Student Front

TV Television

UGC University Grant Commission

UK United Kingdom

UNDP United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

USA United States of America

VAT Value Added Tax

VC Vice Chancellor

VIP Very Important Person

WB World Bank

WTO World Trade Organisation

Abstract

A new phase of higher education in Bangladesh begun in the 1990s in which a remarkable transformation took place in the higher education system, largely based on market-driven economic forces. The government promulgated the Private University Act in 1992, which has been recently repealed in order to enact the new Private University Act 2010. It formulated a twenty-year Strategic Plan for Higher Education 2006-2026 (SPHE) in 2006. Consequently economic as well as political goals became drivers of the higher education system. This transformation informs a set of changes in the higher education sector. Often higher education institutions rely on private investment and the education they offer is shaped in line with the demands of global markets. This thesis explores the degree to which neoliberalism is a prominent feature of the higher education sector in Bangladesh, and the perception of key stakeholders about the influence of hegemonic neoliberal policy on their academic goals.

This research is analytic and qualitative in nature. The overall approach is one of critical analysis, applying what is discussed in the international literature about neoliberalism to the higher education sector in Bangladesh. In the first instance I analysed documents from policy makers, commentators and news reporters in Bangladesh and related these to concepts in the international discussion of monetarism, global market economy and neoliberalism. I then turned to a range of key participants in the sector itself and sought their perceptions through interview in order to fill out the initial document analysis and to ground this discussion in the experiences and understandings of people involved in the sector. The data from these interviews is accompanied by an analysis of further documents relating to the participants' specific workplaces and once again aligned to the international discourse.

The views of participants were sought through interview. A total of twenty-one participants were interviewed under six categories: the University Grant Commission

(UGC) and government officials, owners of private universities, politicians and student activists, public and private university authorities and faculty members, education expert and sociologists, and public and private university students. In addition, I searched and analysed a range of documents as further tools for examining the context of the neoliberal agenda within higher education.

The findings are structured into four subsections: neoliberal hegemony and ideological transformation of higher education, neoliberalism and knowledge-based economy, neoliberalism in the higher education sector and its structural consequences, and neoliberalism and resistance. The findings suggested that the neoliberal shift in the higher education sector in Bangladesh explicitly changes the overall socio-cultural, political and economical patterns of society. Not only are philosophical and pedagogical aspects of higher education changed through neoliberal policy agenda, but higher education also becomes a most expensive commodity in contemporary Bangladesh. Private universities have evolved with an underlying notion of privatisation of higher education, and the process of marketisation of higher education leads to a vocationalisation of higher education. The notion of 'academic entrepreneur' contributes to the development of discriminatory attitudes between students, and between teachers. Profit motivated higher education is adversely impacting on the critical insight of the young generation. The neoliberal policy shift within higher education sector is also leading to large-scale violence in higher education institutions.

Chapter One: Introduction

In order to achieve political reconciliation¹ between Muslims and Hindus in the Bengal in the Indian sub-continent, the British rulers introduced higher education in Bangladesh in 1920s. The distinctive features of higher education in Bangladesh were state sponsorship, residential status of students and staff, and non-affiliation. The first higher education institution, the University of Dhaka, was often known as the Oxford of the East because of these distinctive features and because of its high standard of higher education and research (University of Dhaka, 2008). However, higher education was seen as a catalyst to achieve political goals during the British and the Pakistani regimes. Other universities in Bangladesh adopted the same higher education system until the 1990s. Subsequently, a new phase of higher education began in the 1990s in which a remarkable transformation took place in the higher education system, largely based on market-driven economic forces.

Consequently economic as well as political goals became drivers of the higher education system. This transformation informs a set of changes in the higher education sector. Often higher education institutions rely on private investment and the education they offer is shaped in line with the demands of global markets. This thesis explores the relationships between neoliberalism and higher education in Bangladesh, and the

¹ The establishment of the University of Dhaka, the first university in Bangladesh, was a compensation for the annulment of the partition of Bengal in 1905. The partition provided a hope to the majority Muslim community in the then East Bengal and Assam for the socioeconomic and political development for their people. However, the Bengal partition was lifted in 1911 in a wake of massive protest by the West Bengal-based intelligentsia groups and powerful Hindu leaders in India. Such a decision dissatisfied the Muslim community of the east Bengal. The Muslim leaders met the Viceroy and expressed their fear that the annulment would impede the educational progress of Muslims. Therefore the British ruler promised to establish a university in the capital of east Bengal in order to ensure the progression of the backward Muslim community in these regions. Later, based on the Nathan committee report, the University of Dhaka was established in 1921. The whole process of evolving a university in east Bengal was described by the first vice chancellor, Dr. P. J. Hartog, of the University of Dhaka, as the political origin of the institution (see the prospectus of Dhaka University, 2008 for details)

perception of key stakeholders about the influence of neoliberal policy hegemony on their academic goals.

1.1 Study of Background History

The journey of modern higher education in Bangladesh (then East Bengal) started through the establishment of the University of Dhaka in 1921. Previously, the management of higher education had rested with the University of Kolkata (University Grant Commission², 2007). During British rule, the colonial power formulated the education system as a tool aimed to prolong their domination. They wanted to create a class that would be Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste (Macaulay, 1835, cited in McLeod, 2000). In this process a big part of local history and customs disappeared gradually as the colonial power enforced their colonial ideas onto the natives (Priya, 1998). In 1953, the country's second largest university, the University of Rajshahi, was set up, and subsequently a few more universities were established (University Grant Commission, 2006). Under the Pakistani regime from 1947 to 1971, the role of higher education in society changed; both students and faculties contributed toward the establishment of democracy and liberty of the country (Quddus & Rashid, 2000). From the country's independence in 1971 until 1985, the country had four general and two specialised public universities (University Grant Commission, 2007). Their main goal was to contribute to the newly born country's overall development. Today, there are thirty-one public universities and fifty-four private universities offering different courses at undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate levels (University Grant Commission, 2009). Most of the new universities, both public and private, tend to offer degrees in business and technology related disciplines.

² The University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh is the statutory apex body in the field of higher education in Bangladesh. The primary objectives of the UGC are to supervise, maintain, promote and coordinate university education. The UGC assesses the needs of the public universities in terms of funding and advises Government in various issues related to higher education in Bangladesh. The UGC was established under the President's Order (P.O.) No. 10 of 1973 which was deemed to have come into force with effect from 16 December 1972.

Neoliberal policies of the international financial institutions (IFIs) play a crucial role in formulating various socioeconomic policies in postcolonial states. One of the key assumptions of these neoliberal policies is that human welfare is best served by the withdrawal of the state from welfare policies. The state is expected to create a congenial atmosphere for the market by introducing different laws and institutions necessary for its operation (Olssen and Peters, 2005). Since the 1980s Bangladesh has formally adopted such policies in various sectors of the economy, for instance in agriculture, industry, and finance and banking (Nuruzzaman, 2004) and thus, redefined the role of the state in serving its citizens. Bangladesh was one of the first amongst thirty-five countries to receive the structural adjustment facilities (SAF) and the extended structural adjustment facilities (ESAF) of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1986 and 1989 (Bhattacharya, Rahman, & Khatun, 1999).

More recently, a neoliberal policy agenda has been introduced in the higher education sector in Bangladesh. In doing so, the government of Bangladesh has initiated a number of reform programmes in the higher education sector under the supervision and the guidance of the IFIs. One of these reform policies is the introduction of a "Strategic Plan for Higher Education in Bangladesh: 2006-2026" (SPHE) (University Grant Commission, 2006). A preliminary critical review shows that the objective of this view plan is to connect higher education with market-driven economic forces. Education is a key target of the neoliberal project because of the market size. An indicator of this is the global spending on education which is more than US\$1 trillion (Ross & Gibson, 2007). The demands of the market shape the nature of higher education and the role of the state is redefined so that the lead role is played by the market forces. Nonetheless, neoliberal policy itself is a political paradigm and it is projected to redefine the political views and ideologies of the people connected with the capitalist system (ibid).

Against this backdrop, this study will explore the degree to which neoliberalism is a prominent feature of the higher education sector in Bangladesh. Such neoliberal policy driven higher education will have far-reaching socioeconomic consequences, especially

in a developing country like Bangladesh. In the discourse of neoliberalism, society is treated as a market where the individual becomes a commodity of the market (Lipman, 2007). Market forces determine the nature of the higher education system, and thus increasing tuition fees and market-oriented disciplines can be identified as the central focus in the higher education sector in contemporary Bangladesh. Most of the private universities are set up without their own infrastructure and offer a limited number of subjects, particularly business and technology related subjects.

1.2 Rationale of the Research

Historically, higher education in Bangladesh was provided by the state sponsor in order to generate at least ideally true knowledge building in society. Since the 1990s the higher education system has been reformed by the government. On the one hand, the role of the state, in the higher education sector has been gradually reduced, resulting in the emergence of a large number of private universities, and on the other hand, radical changes have been made in content and curriculum in the higher education system in relation to the global market. Therefore, purely academic goals rarely exist in the higher education system today. Two questions remain prevalent today. Firstly, has higher education become a 'shallow commodity' and so fail to take individuals into the highest citadel of learning? Secondly, is higher education subjected to capitalist ideology? To get closer to an answer to these questions, the different policies incorporated into the higher education sector and their impact on the higher education sector and society should be investigated.

1.3 Research Questions

The concerns discussed above give rise to the following research questions:

How do the demands of market-driven forces influence higher education in Bangladesh?

How do staff and students in higher education perceive the influence of neoliberalism on their academic goals?

In what way does neoliberalism promote the values of a free market culture that upholds the prevailing capitalist system in Bangladesh?

How do various sociopolitical organisations react to the neoliberal policy agenda in the higher education sector in Bangladesh?

1.4 Key Terms

To maintain consistency of meaning throughout the study, the definition of key terms is provided in the following section.

1.4.1 Neoliberalism

In a broader sense, neoliberalism refers to an economic model or paradigm which rose to preeminence in the 1980s based on the 'classical liberal ideal of the self-regulating market' (Steger & Roy, 2010, p. 11). Three intertwined manifestations need to be understood in order to conceptualise neoliberalism: an ideology, a mode of governance, and a policy package (ibid). "Ideologies organize their core ideas into fairly simple truth-claims that encourage people to act in certain ways...legitimize certain political interests and to defend or challenge dominant power structure (ibid)". The second dimension, a mode of governance, refers to what Foucault called 'governmentalities, which are deep rooted in entrepreneurial values; for example, competitiveness, self-interest and the decentralisation. It emphasises individual empowerment and decentralisation of the power to local units and thus, neoliberalism promotes a self-regulating free market in order to ensure proper government. The final dimension, a policy package, refers to the deregulation of the economy, liberalisation of trade and industry, and privatisation of state-owned enterprises. It also includes "massive tax cuts; reduction of social services and welfare programme; replacing welfare with 'workface'" (ibid, p. 14).

1.4.2 Higher education

In this study higher education refers to 'general education'³, science, technology and engineering education, and agricultural education in the tertiary sector. "Higher education consists of a three year pass-course or a four year honours course for the bachelor's degree, followed by a two year Master's for pass graduates and a one year Master's course for honours graduates" (University Grant Commission, 2006, p. 4).

1.5 Organisation of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into six chapters. In the introductory section, chapter one examines the context for the study, and offers a rationale for the research. It also states the research questions, and provides a definition of key terms.

Chapter two discusses the research methodology. In particular, it describes why a critical analysis approach is used, and examines my position as a researcher and a teacher in a Bangladesh university. It also describes the design of the research.

Chapter three addresses the theoretical framework. In it the discourse of 'neoliberalism' in the broader global context is reviewed. Neoliberalism is not a new phenomenon but has a historical relation with the classical liberal tradition. The chapter describes the concept and the theoretical origins of neoliberalism. Then it addresses how various policies are blending with neoliberalism around the globe, its relations with international financial institutions, and how neoliberal policy change is reflected in the higher education sector.

Chapter four describes the socioeconomic and political context of Bangladesh. It discusses how neoliberal policy in Bangladesh, a developing country, is incorporated in various sectors. It also explores the context in which this doctrine emerged and was incorporated into the higher education sector.

³ 'General education' denotes liberal arts, social science and business related education.

Chapter five presents the perception of a range of key players in the higher sector in Bangladesh. The themes that arise are related to the literature of neoliberalism and the sociopolitical context of Bangladesh.

Chapter six addresses the consequences of neoliberalism in the higher education sector. It uses the illustrative example of three institutions to examine the trend of marketisation in higher education. This chapter also concentrates on resistance to the neoliberal policy in the higher education sector.

The concluding section, chapter seven, summarises the findings and revisits the research questions to discuss the broader implication of neoliberalism in the higher education sector on society in Bangladesh.

In the next chapter I describe the methodological approach and overall procedures of the study.

Chapter Two: Research Methodology and Procedures

2.1 Broad Approach

The approach in this thesis is one of critical analysis, applying what is discussed in the international literature about neoliberalism to the higher education sector in Bangladesh. In the first instance I have analysed documents from policy makers, commentators and news reporters in Bangladesh and related these to concepts in the international discussion of monetarism, global market economy and neoliberalism. This analysis forms the substance of Chapters Three and Four.

I have then turned to a range of key participants in the sector itself and sought their perceptions through interview in order to fill out the initial document analysis and to ground this discussion in the experiences and understandings of people involved in the sector. The data from these interviews is accompanied by an analysis of further documents relating to the participants' specific workplaces and once again aligned to the international discourse. This material is presented in Chapters Five and Six.

In some ways the engagement with participants could be seen as a composite and illustrative case study. It is qualitative because of its narrative and descriptive nature (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). As an illustrative case study it focuses on the impact of the neoliberal policy agenda in the higher education sector as perceived by stakeholders. I use the data from the institutions and from the participants to add depth and detail to what is a largely theoretical analysis.

In dealing with specific events qualitative research investigates the rich details of where and how. In this way it aims to unfold the complexity of historical situations and movements that influences the event investigated (ibid). On the other hand, the criticalist as researcher or theorist "attempts to use her or his works as a form of social or cultural criticism"(Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994, p. 139). Specific assumptions about

power relations, which are historically and socially constituted, are identified as tools of criticism (ibid). In fact, power relations are deeply rooted in the social value system of capitalist society. Therefore, the relationship between 'concept' and 'object' and between 'signifier' and 'signified' is not fixable and is mediated by social relations of 'capitalists production' and 'consumption' (ibid, p. 139). A critical research approach critiques existing ideology and facilitates the understanding of dominant relationships in society (Kilgore, 1998, cited in Willis, 2007). Furthermore, the critical researcher is concerned with human action and reaction from a historical perspective. In this process the researcher enters into the participants' world extract in order to acquire "an interpretative understanding of their meanings", and to expose how the prevailing social condition is maintained through a historical and empirical analysis (Kilgore, 1998, cited in ibid, p. 82).

A critical approach to documents and access to perceptions of key stakeholders helped me to analyse how market-driven economic forces determine the higher education system in Bangladesh. On this basis I developed critique of the neoliberal policy agenda that has been incorporated into the higher education sector in Bangladesh since the 1990s. Often empirical observation is not sufficient to accomplish theoretical analysis and critical reflection (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994). Such empirical analysis requires investigation in order to unveil the various contradictions with the support of objective descriptions of documents (ibid). As a result, analyses of different official documents allowed me to explore the historical roots of the privatisation of higher education in Bangladesh, linking it to neoliberalism. Scholarly critical analysis contributed to making sense of the policy documents which also helped to explore how neoliberalism assists in the continuation of the prevailing capitalist system.

A critical methodological approach acknowledges external realities and tends to empower the oppressed as the basis of its critical paradigm (Willis, 2007). This qualitative study attempts to explain how the different sociopolitical organisations react to neoliberalism in the higher education sector in Bangladesh, particularly to understand

how different sociopolitical groups and their activists' perceive neoliberalism in higher education, and how they shape their resistance.

2.2 My Position within the Research

I have been teaching the sociology of education at the Institute of Education and Research (IER) at the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh since the 2005. I earned my undergraduate and graduate degrees in sociology from the same university. Through my involvement in the University of Dhaka, I acquired prior knowledge about the higher education system and its relations to the neoliberal policy agenda. I knew how the teachers' community and students were divided into different groups based on their political ideologies and belief systems. As a teacher I often experienced how students' expectations and behaviour shifted according to their relationship with the capitalist ideology. At the same time, I observed that some students' organisations organised resistance to the prevailing capitalist system. From this perspective I am an insider in this study.

However in other ways, I am an outsider to this study. Firstly, I have no involvement with the power structures within or outside of the university that would enable me to influence either the existing higher education system or would enable the system's trends to influence my study. Secondly, being a junior teacher, I have only a small capacity to influence any decisions of the university. Both public and private universities in Bangladesh are operated through different administrative bodies, including senate, syndicate, regent board, board of trustees, and academic council. I am not part of or a member of any of these administrative bodies. While I have been teaching at one institution in one university, there are about eighty-five other public and private universities operating in Bangladesh which I cannot influence as they are far away both in terms of distance and administrative function.

Rather, as a researcher, I emphasise maintaining objectivity throughout the research, particularly during the collection and interpretation of participants' experiences and

viewpoints. My prior knowledge and experiences within the sector helped me to collect data and to construct a potential critique of the findings. Inevitably, however, they have also influenced the way I construct a conceptual framework for this study.

Consequently, it is important to acknowledge that this study is partial and situated. Nevertheless, it offers a needed platform for further investigation and debate.

2.3 Design of the Study

2.3.1 Participants and settings

A total of twenty-one participants were interviewed in this study under six categories: the University Grant Commission (UGC) and government officials, owners of private universities, politicians and student activists, public and private university authorities and faculty members, education expert and sociologists, and public and private university students. In the first category two participants - a top official of the University Grant Commission and an additional secretary - were interviewed in this study. One owner participated in the second category. A total of five activists participated in the third category. Three vice chancellors (VCs) and four faculty members from both public and private universities participated in the following category. An education expert and two sociologists from public and private universities participated in the fifth category. In the final category, three students were interviewed, one from a public university and two from a private university. The following table summarises the participants. The real names of the participants have been replaced by pseudonyms.

Table 1: Summary of the participants

Category	Participant s' name	Current position	Gende r	Age (appx.)	Experiences
The UGC and the government officials	Professor Rahman	Senior official of UGC	Male	68	Worked as a professor for a public university for about thirty-five years
	Dilruba	Senior bureacrate of the	Femal	55	Worked in many ministries

		government of Bangladesh	e		for the government. Currently works in a project of higher education funded by World Bank
Owner of a private university	Abdul Hye	Member of Board of Trustees of a private university	Male	65	Former bureaucrat, and worked as pro-vice chancellor for the same private university for about ten years
Politicians and student activists	Noman Sayed	Leader of Bangladesh Nationalist Party	Male	65	Former Education Minister and worked for World Bank for a long time.
	Arafat	Leader of <i>Ganosamhati Andolon</i>	Male	37	Prominant student leader in 1990s. Currently involves in various national movements.
	Abir	Leader of Socialist Students Front (SSF)	Male	30	Organised resistance in the public universities.
	Habib	Leader of Bangladesh Student Federation (BSF)	Male	27	Organised resistance in the public universities.
	Hasib	Leader of Bangladesh Student Union (BSU)	Male	29	Organised resistance in the public universities.
Public and private universities' authorities and faculty members	Professor Azim	Vice chancellor of a private university	Male	68	Ex-vice chancellor of a public university and worked as an professor of sociology for about thirty-five years for a public university. He also worked as an ambassador for the government of Bangladesh.
	Professor Nurul	Vice chancellor of a public university	Male	66	Worked as a dean and as a professor in physics for about thrity-seven years.
	Professor Itfad	Senior faculty member of a public university	Male	62	Worked as a dean and as first vice chancellor of a public university. Has taught in micro-biology for about

					thirty years.
	Professor Nur	Senior faculty member of a public university and current chairman of a department	Male	58	Has taught in economics for more than twenty years.
	Professor Oyasim	Senior faculty member of a public university	Male	60	Worked as chairman of a department and has taught in economics for about twenty-five years.
	Professor Nilima	Mid-level faculty member of a public university and current chairman of a department	Female	45	Has taught in computer science and engineering for about fifteen years.
	Kaniz	Junior faculty of a private university	Female	28	Has taught in genetics engineering for about three years.
Education expert and sociologists	Professor Guho	Professor of the University Grant Commission	Male	72	Worked as a professor of physics of a public university, and as an education expert for UGC and various organisations. Currently involves in the education movement through a civil society organisation.
	Professor Ahkam	Senior faculty member and current chairman of a department	Male	62	Has taught in sociology for about thirty-two years in a public university.
	Professor Sharma	Senior faculty member of a private university	Male	59	Worked as a faculty member in the US for a long time and has works as political sociologist in a private university for about nine years.
Public and private university	Rohini	Student of a public university	Female	24	A third year student in the Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA)

students	Hasan	Student of a private university	Male	22	A second year student in the (BBA)
	Tomal	Student of a private university	Male	23	A second year student in Mass Communication and Media Arts

The University Grant Commission and the government officials, as they are involved in the formulation of higher education policies, provided information on the context of the neoliberal policy agenda in higher education and current trends in the higher education system in Bangladesh. The owner of a private university provided a context for the setting up of private universities and their relationship with market forces. At the same time, viewpoints from major political parties helped me to understand their political and ideological perspectives within the capitalist system, particularly about changes in higher education. Similarly, discussion with different student activists provided perspectives about resistance to the neoliberal policy agenda. The top officials and faculty members of public universities and private universities, education experts and sociologists provided information that explored the consequences of the neoliberal policy agenda. Their information also helped me to comprehend the university context of the marketisation of higher education. The discussions with students of public and private universities helped me to understand students' views about the current higher education system, and how it is influenced by market forces. They also provided information about how the higher education system influences them in terms of attitudes to a free market culture.

2.3.2 Access to participants

Gaining access to participants is a vital concern of any study. Some topics and settings are difficult because access to participants is difficult, or the subjects are controversial (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Gaining access to participants often relies on the trust and communication skills of the researcher (Janesick, 1994, cited in Savenye & Robinson, 2005). I used a 'cooperative style' and networking to gain access to the participants

(Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I explained the reasons for conducting such research, and offered co-operation to the participants. I established close rapport with participants and that helped me to gather information in depth (Fontona & Frey, 2003).

2.3.3 Tools for participant data collection

I employed interviews as the main tool for data collection. I used an initial checklist (Appendices 1 - 5) followed by unstructured open-ended questions. As the participants were selected purposefully on the basis of their diverse experiences, the interview method allowed me to gain substantial information on specific issues. The results of the interviews provided deeper understanding of social phenomena (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008) and allowed me to learn more about the various views, understandings, experiences, beliefs, and motivation of the different participants.

In addition, I searched and analysed a range of documents as further tools for examining the context of the neoliberal agenda within higher education (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

2.3.4 Analysis and presentation

My interviews were conducted in Bengali, and I translated them into English. Consequently the exact choice of words is mine, but I have endeavoured to stay true to the participants' intentions.

Within a qualitative framework it is important to make sense of interview data in terms of the intentions of the participants. Therefore I used an interpretive structure to analyse the data, in order to systematically group, summarise the description, and provide a coherent organising framework (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004). Based on Coffey and Atkinson's (1996) data categorisation, moving from general to specific categories, I developed eight themes. These are: the legacy of colonialism, the nexus between international financial institutions (IFIs) and the 'power elite', depoliticisation, production of skilled labour, academic freedom, subject reification, neoliberal violence, and popular

resistance. These themes form the headings of Chapters Five and Six. These themes are particularly illustrated by participant feedback on the emerging neoliberal model of the public universities in Bangladesh, marketisation of higher education, and the development of evening courses as a new means of financing in public universities.

2.3.5 Rigour and trustworthiness

Rigour and trustworthiness in qualitative research are often critiqued (Rolfe, 2006). However, qualitative research embraces multiple standards of quality (Morrow, 2005). In this study, rigour and trustworthiness refer to the criteria of validity, credibility, and believability of the research (Horrison, MacGibbon & Morton, 2001). Adequate amounts of evidence are important aspects of the rigour and trustworthiness of a research project. This study emphasises the quality, length, and depth of interview. I used purposeful sampling to enable me to gather significant information and generate a detailed description of the situation and participants' reactions. Furthermore, the diverse backgrounds of participants provided multiple perspectives. The production of an information-rich case study was facilitated by holding "conversations with a purpose" (Dexter, 1970, cited in Morrow 2005, p. 225), in which a designed checklist of questions was followed with contextually relevant open-ended questions.

Analysis of various public documents and media reports have further enriched the data. Finally, the issues of the relationships between researcher and researched, identified as significant components of this research, may raise some question of the rigour and trustworthiness of the research (Bloom, 1997; Coffey, 1996; Cotterill, 1992, cited in Horrison et al., 2001). The notion of 'reciprocity' was used which empowered the researched, and reduced the hierarchies between the participants and myself as a researcher. Reciprocity involved building rapport, creating a sense of safety, honouring participants' voices, developing potential benefit to the participants as well as to the researcher (ibid). These conditions helped to gather rich and thick data which are the basis of rigour and trustworthiness in this research.

2.3.6 Ethical issues

This study received ethical approval from the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee (ERHEC) at the University of Canterbury. Specific attention was paid during data collection (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). After receiving ethical approval from ERHEC I started to get verbal consent from different participants over the phone and through email in order to empower the researched (Glesne & Peshkin, 1993). I informed the participants about the purposes of the research, their individual rights, particularly in terms of respect for their dignity, privacy and anonymity. I followed up with a formal information letter (Appendix 6). In the consent form (Appendix 7), the participants were clearly informed that their participation was voluntary and they could freely choose to stop participation in any point (Diener & Crandall, 1978, cited in Glesne & Peshkin, 1993). The consent form was written in English and translated into Bengali, and the Bengali version helped to provide a better understanding of the research purposes and overall processes of study. Both the information letter and the consent form in both Bengali and English versions were sent to participants before starting the interview.

After getting verbal consent, interview schedules were arranged for the various participants based on their choice of time. I prioritised participants' desires so that they could talk freely (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I introduced myself before starting interviews and explained the goals of the research again. Some participants were confused about the research title. They asked me why the title was "the politics of neoliberalism" instead of "the impact of neoliberalism". This gave rise to a brief discussion on the research objectives which helped to increase participants' understanding of what the study was looking for. As previously stated, I used pseudonyms for everyone to prevent the participants from any harm (Glesne & Peshkin, 1993). During the interview everyone was treated with dignity and respect according to their culture. After conducting the interviews I collected the consent form in its English version with each participant's signature. In order to ensure confidentiality of the raw data, the data will be securely

stored at the University of Canterbury. I explained to the participants how the data would be used for report writing and publications, while maintaining anonymity.

2.3.7 Limitations of the study

There are some explicit limitations to this study. Firstly, there is no prior research on this issue within a Bangladeshi context which I could use as a guide for my research.

Therefore I have had to build my own scaffold of theoretical assumptions based on my reading of international literature.

Secondly, the number of participants is relatively small. This factor suggests it would not be useful to overly generalise the findings. However, despite its limited scope, the study does present an initial platform from which to examine the impact of neoliberalism on the higher education sector in Bangladesh from a Bangladeshi perspective, and can form a basis from which to conduct further studies on this issue.

2.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I provided details of the methodological approach and procedures used in this study. I acknowledged my position as a researcher and as a junior teacher of a university. I discussed the tools I used to collect data, analyse and present it. The ethical issue was considered in which I maintained the pseudonyms of the participants. Finally I addressed the limitations of this study.

In the next chapter I address the theoretical origins of neoliberal discourse, its relationship with international financial Institutions, and how and why the neoliberal policy agenda has been incorporated internationally in various sectors along with the higher education sector.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Issues: Neoliberalism and Higher Education

3.1 Introduction

The theoretical issues that underlie this thesis are addressed by tracing the concept of neoliberalism and its origins. This chapter addresses the relationships between traditional liberal theory and neoliberalism, and the relations with the theories of Hayek, and Milton Friedman's theories of monetarism, James Buchanan's public choice theory, agency theory, and cost-transaction economics. The discussion addresses how the neoliberal policy agenda has been incorporated around the world since the late 1970s; both capitalist and socialist countries are adopting neoliberal policy agendas to overcome financial *stagflation*⁴. The discussion is followed by addressing the mechanisms of introducing neoliberal policy agendas. The chapter discusses the role of international financial institutions in promoting neoliberalism throughout the world, particularly in the developing world, in every development sector. Then the discussion turns to explore how neoliberalism is manifested in the higher education sector all over the globe.

3.2 The Concept of Neoliberalism

The term 'neoliberalism', which was first coined in the post-World War I period by a small number of economists and legal scholars affiliated with the 'Freiberg School', is not a new phenomenon (Steger & Roy, 2010, p. ix). The discourse of neoliberalism comes directly from classical economic liberalism that emerged in the nineteenth century (MacEwan, 1999). It rapidly spread in the western world with the generalised capitalist crisis associated with the end of the post-war reconstruction boom and emerged as an ideological response to the crisis of the 'Keynesian welfare state'

⁴ The term 'stagflation' is used by a number of authors (including Harvey, 2005; Steger & Roy, 2010) to denote stagnation in economic growth.

(Clarke, 2005, p. 58). "The major characteristics of neoliberalism emerged in the United States in the 1970s as a forced response to stagflation and the collapse of the Bretton Woods system [the World Bank group system] of international trade and exchange, leading to the abolition of capital control in 1974 in America and 1979 in Britain" (Olssen & Peters, 2005, p. 314). In the recent global context, a broader perspective is considered to define neoliberalism along with its traditional concept of an ascendant economic policy agenda. The economic, political, and cultural aspects of society are affected by its complex values, ideologies, and practices (Ross & Gibson, 2007). As part of the economic aspect of neoliberalism, globalisation is an intrinsic feature. Martinez and Garcia (2000) argue that the concept of neoliberalism is no more than 25 years old. For them, neoliberalism is:

a set of economic policies that have become widespread during the last 25 years or so. Although the word is rarely heard in the United States, you can clearly see the effects of neo-liberalism here as the rich grow richer and the poor grow poorer ... Around the world, neo-liberalism has been imposed by powerful financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank ... The capitalist crisis over the last 25 years, with its shrinking profit rates, inspired the corporate elite to revive economic liberalism. That's what makes it "neo" or new (cited in Ross & Gibson, 2007, pp. 1-2).

Neoliberalism advocates market fundamentalism since state interference in the market mechanism contributes to poor economic performance. Therefore, it influences a number of changes in the relationships between state and society. Prechel and Harms (2007) identify five processes of neoliberalism:

...expand markets by eliminating government policies interfering with markets, cut taxes to simultaneously reduce the resources of inefficient government and channel them to private investors for capital formation, privatize by selling public properties to private economic actors, commodify things that were not originally

produced to be exchanged in the market (e.g. health, education, pollution), and eliminate social programs to establish personal responsibility (p. 5).

In relation to pure economic gain, Martinez and Garcia further (2000) describe the main points of neoliberalism. Firstly, *the rule of market* refers to liberating free/private enterprise from any restriction imposed by the state (government) no matter what social damage results. Secondly, *cutting public expenditures for social services* refers to reducing government support from education and health care. Thirdly, *deregulation* refers to the reduction of government regulation. Fourthly, *privatization* means to sell state-owned enterprises, goods, and services to private investors (including public education services), and finally, *elimination of the concept of "public goods" or "community"* means the individual has the core responsibility to manage his own life (cited in Ross & Gibson, 2007, p. 3).

Harvey (2006) also points out four features of neoliberalism: privatisation, financialisation, the management and manipulation of crisis, and state redistributions. He argues that public assets are targeted to be corporatised, commoditised and privatised in the neoliberal project. Public utilities of all kinds (water, telecommunications, transportation), social welfare provisions (social housing, education, health care, pensions), public institutions (such as universities, research laboratories, prisons) and even warfare (as illustrated by the "army" of private contractors operating alongside the armed forces in Iraq) have all been privatised to some degree throughout the capitalist world (p.44).

In order to avoid confusion about the concepts of globalisation and neoliberalism, some theorists distinguish between them. The terms 'globalisation' and 'neoliberalism' are related to each other; however, they refer to different sets of mechanisms (Duménil & Lévy, 2005). Olssen and Peters (2005) argue that "neoliberalism must be seen as a specific economic discourse or philosophy which has become dominant and effective in world economic relations as a consequence of super power sponsorship" (p. 314). By

emphasising super power sponsorship, Olssen and Peters in fact emphasise the political aspect of neoliberalism. It is an ideology which affects political process and legitimates policies used to accumulate capital for the dominant power block of the world (Prechel & Harms, 2007).

McCarthy and Prudham (2004) argue that it is very difficult to define neoliberalism entirely. Ward and England (2007) outline its four main features: neoliberalism as an ideological hegemonic project, neoliberalism as policy and programme, neoliberalism as a state form, and neoliberalism as a form of governmentality. They discuss the concept of neoliberalism in the broader perspective; however, marketisation, which is redefined in the global context, remains the center point of neoliberalism. McLaren and Farahmandpur (2005) succinctly define neoliberalism as:

... a corporate domination of society that supports state enforcement of the unregulated market, engages in the oppression of non-market forces and antimarket policies, guts free public services, eliminates social subsidies, offers limitless concessions to transnational corporations, enthrones a neomercantilist public policy agenda, establishes the market as the patron of educational reform, and permits private interests to control most of social life in the pursuit of profits for the few ... It is undeniably one of the most dangerous politics that we face today (cited in Kumar, 2009, p. 146).

3.3 The Theoretical Origins of Neoliberalism

Neoliberal ideology is grounded in the 'classical liberal tradition', which was primarily hailed by Adam Smith in his treatise, *The Wealth of Nations*, in 1776 (Prechel & Harms, 2007, p. 3). For Smith, the individual should be freed from government interventions to enhance the wealth of nations and markets should be treated as the best forces to coordinate and distribute the productions and goods effectively (ibid). Neoliberalism aligns the concept of free markets with individual freedom, *laissez faire*, and the individual entrepreneur with classical liberalism (Harms, 2007, p. 64). However,

neoliberalism goes beyond classical liberalism by embracing *market fundamentalism* since it is believed in neoliberal ideology that society is a market where "every human being is an entrepreneur managing their own life, and should act as such" (Treanor, 2005, cited in Prechel & Harms, 2007, p. 4).

The systematic formulation of neoliberalism comes from the principles of the 'Mont Pelerin Society' which was founded by Freiderich August von Hayek in 1947 (Steger & Roy, 2010). The founding statement of the 'Mont Pelerin Society' reads as follows:

The central values of civilization are in danger. Over large stretches of the earth's surface the essential conditions of human dignity and freedom have already disappeared. In others they are under constant menace from the development of current tendencies of policy. The position of the individual and the voluntary group are progressively undermined by extensions of arbitrary power. Even that most precious possession of Western man, freedom of thought and expression, is threatened by the spread of creeds which, claiming the privilege of tolerance when in the position of a minority, seek only to establish a position of power in which they can suppress and obliterate all views but their own (cited in Harvey, 2005, p. 20).

In academia, neoliberal theory became a dominant discourse when the Nobel Prize in economics was awarded to Hayek in 1974 and Friedman in 1976 for their work on neoliberalism. Harvey (2005) points out that "neoliberal theory, particularly in its monetarist guise, began to exert practical influence in a variety of policy fields ... But the dramatic consolidation of neoliberalism as a new economic orthodox regulating public policy at the state level in the advanced capitalist world occurred in the United States and Britain in 1979 (p. 22)".

The roots of neoliberalism are grounded in the collective works of Hayek, and theories of monetarism by Milton Friedman, public choice theory by James Buchanan, agency theory, and cost-transaction economics (Olssen & Peters, 2005; Roberts, 2007). In his

book, *The Road to Serfdom* (1944), Hayek addressed the problem of planned socialist economy and suggested that "the absence of a pricing system would prevent producers from knowing true production possibilities and costs" (cited in Roberts & Peters, 2008, p. 12). In 1949, he critiqued the role of intellectuals, academic institutions and their ideas for the rise of socialism in his paper, *The Intellectual and Socialism*. For Hayek, the failing of liberal values in Germany paved the way to equating fascism and socialism (Plehwe & Walpen, 2006). He argued that any movement in the direction of socialism leads to totalitarianism. Although different political theorists, for example de Tocqueville and Lord Acton, argued that socialism means slavery, Europe had gradually moved toward socialism. Hayek emphasised that economic freedom should be treated as the political and moral force that "shaped all others aspect of a free and open society" (Steger & Roy, 2010, p. 15). He argued that "the increasing of economic freedom led not only to rapid economic growth and the development of science and technology but also to the "undesigned and unforeseen by-product of political freedom"" (Hayek, 1944, cited in Kohl & Farthing, 2006, p. 16). He said:

...if we are to avoid such a development we must be able to offer a new liberal program, which appeals to the imagination. We must make the building of a free society once more an intellectual adventure, a deed of courage (Hayek, 1949b, cited in Plehwe & Walpen, 2006, p. 33).

For Hayek, individual freedom from society was a key aspect in the development of modern European history. Individual effort can lead to a "complex order of economic development" which requires political freedom (Hayek, 1944, p. 12). Because of consistent arguments in favour of economic freedom, the growth of economic activity flourished. Industrial freedom created spaces for using new knowledge to change the world rapidly in the last hundred and fifty years. In contrast, socialism does not believe in private property, rather it emphasises a planned economy where the entrepreneur works for a central planning body.

Hayek's arguments had a two-fold basis: economic and moral (or as he sometimes called it political). The state's interventions in the individual's affairs hamper the entire development of the individual's personality since state cannot maintain impartiality. He said:

If the state is precisely to foresee the incidence of its actions, it means that it can leave those affected no choice ... In a world where everything was precisely foreseen, the state could hardly do anything and remain impartial ... The state ceases to be a piece of utilitarian machinery intended to help individuals in the fullest development of their individual personality and becomes a "moral" institution – where "moral" is not used in contrast to immoral, but describes an institution which imposes on its members its views on all moral questions, whether these views be moral or highly immoral. In this sense the Nazi or any other collectivist state is "moral", while the liberal state is not (ibid, p. 57).

Money is treated as the most important tool of freedom created by men which gives people choice in society. Hayek argued that people believe that economic planning affects the economic interest but it does not impede the basic value of life. Economic control means the control of all sorts of things in life. But economic freedom in central planning means that planning is lead by collectivism instead of individualism and it is trying to make us believe that the collective effort solves our own economic problems. Socialist systems tend to avoid concepts of economic and political freedom. However, our generation has forgotten that economic freedom ensures other freedoms. "As soon as the state takes upon itself the task of planning the whole economic life, the problem of the due station of the different individuals and groups must indeed inevitably become the central political problem" (ibid, p.80).

Similarly, Friedman, in his theory of monetarism, argued for economic freedom. Drawing on an example from a US perspective, he said that two broad principles need to be addressed to create maximum opportunity for economic growth. Firstly, "the scope of government must be limited, and secondly, government power must be dispersed"

(Friedman, 1962, p. 2). The liberals contributed to establishing and patronising state intervention in the name of welfare and social equity in the twentieth century. For Friedman, economic freedom is an indispensable condition for social development, while political freedom is a result of economic freedom. "There is an intimate connection between economics and politics, that only certain combinations of political and economic arrangements are possible, and that, in particular, a society which is socialist cannot also be democratic, in the sense of guaranteeing individual freedom" (ibid, p. 8). Economic freedom is also an indispensable part of total freedom and a particular style of economic organisation ensures economic freedom. Capitalism is necessary for political freedom since it contributes to the separation of economic power from political power.

Friedman (1962) argued that although some might claim that it is possible to ensure freedom in the socialist society by overcoming various difficulties, no one, so far, had been seen to talk in favour of socialism and freedom at the same time. As he said (1962):

By contrast, it is clear how a free market capitalist society fosters freedom ... One may believe, as I do, that communism would destroy all of our freedoms, one may be opposed to it as firmly and as strongly as possible, and yet, at the same time, also believe that in a free society it is intolerable for a man to be prevented from making voluntary arrangements with others that are mutually attractive because he believes in or is trying to promote communism (pp. 19 & 20).

Conversely, Buchanan introduced a major shift from liberal to neoliberal government processes of reform in which state mechanisms intend to work for economic growth (Olssen, 2002; Olssen & Peters, 2005). "Public choice", as a set of ideas about politics, emerged during the post-revolutionary and post-socialist period of intense ideological conflict and matured with the decline of Marxist views of the socialist and collectivist ideal (Buchanan, 1993, p. 67). Buchanan argued that public choice provides an explanation of the failure of political processes of the socialist system. He said:

...public choice has been influential through its ability to offer an understanding explanation of the observed failures of political processes, whether these are socialist efforts to control whole societies by command or particularized efforts at sector-by-sector politicization. The consequences of public choice will presumably be reflected in the increased difficulty that collectivist-control advocates will face in restoring the status quo ante in non- Western regimes and in expanding the range of politicization in Western settings (1993, p.67).

In his view, "public choice theorists were concerned with the marketization of the public sector through the deliberate actions of the state" (Olssen & Peters, 2005, p. 319). Markets were seen as a useful technology to be used by the state. Buchanan relies on *conscious action* instead of faith in the concept of the 'spontaneous' ordering of market that was emphasised by Hayek (Reisman, 1990, cited in *ibid*). He distinguished between the 'protective state' and the 'productive state'. The protective state is one that develops a strong set of constitutional rules whereas the productive state allows relatively free participation where the state acts merely as a 'policeman' to regulate market flow positively (Buchanan & Tullock, 1962, cited in *ibid*).

Buchanan stated that economists should emphasise the process of exchange and trade where individuals are deemed to achieve mutual benefits. He stressed the impact of individual choice and public good is defined through individual evaluation (Engelen, 2007). Buchanan defined the concept of the individual more broadly. He explained that while individuals prefer to satisfy their own preference that does not mean that individuals intend to maximise their self-interest. "The claim that someone does something because he prefers to do so does not stipulate what his underlying motivations are" (Buchanan & Tullock, 1962, Engelen, 2007, p. 168).

Olssen and Peters (2005) identify agency theory as one of the important elements of neoliberalism, which represents work relations hierarchically as a series of contracts between one party, referred to as the principal, and another, referred to as the agent. Agency theory is concerned with the problems of compliance and control in the division

of labour in work relationships. Work relations hierarchically refer to the chain of authority and command that can be used to describe the authority relationships at all levels of management hierarchy (ibid). According to Olssen and Peters (2005):

Agency theory theorizes hierarchical work relationships as contracts where a principal becomes a commissioning party to specify or delegate work to an agent to perform in return for some specified sanction or reward. As such, it is concerned with how to extract compliance from a voluntary exchange relationship based on dependency. Hence, it speaks to the relationship between employer and employee in all types of work contexts—schools, government agencies, universities and businesses (p. 320).

Like other neoliberal theories, transaction cost economic theory assumes a socio-ontological context of 'uncertainty', 'bounded rationality', 'limited' and 'asymmetrical' information, and of the 'opportunism' of the 'self-interested' subject. This theory endeavours to show why various sorts of organisational forms may be preferred to a pure market form (Olssen & Peters, 2005, p. 321).

3.4 Neoliberalism around the Globe

Based on Hayek's political and economic discourse, Thatcher (1979-90), and Reagan (1981-88) formulated policies on 'free' trade and established the 'open' market during 1980s (Roberts & Peters, 2008, p. 14). With the support of the US President, Ronald Reagan, and the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, the neoliberal policy agenda took over in the English-speaking world. Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser (1975-83) and the Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney (1984-93) endorsed their campaign through public policies and programmes (Steger & Roy, 2010). Munck (2005) argues that Thatcher, Reagan, and Pinochet in Chile took their neoliberal views from Hayek and Friedman, and used them to make the strong state to "roll back" state interferences and combine free market mechanisms. China formulated a neoliberal

policy in 1978, whereas India and Sweden partially moved towards neoliberalism in the 1980s and in the early 1990s respectively (Harvey, 2005).

In May 1979, Margaret Thatcher was elected as the Prime Minister of Britain with a strong mandate to reform the economy. She abandoned the Keynesian policy model and introduced 'monetary policy' solutions in order to conquer the stagflation of British economy that started in 1970s (Harvey, 2005). Harvey (2005) argues that Thatcher introduced the neoliberal policy agenda in various sectors without being forced by the US. Rather, the economic crises increased the unemployment rate and accelerated inflation. In order to reduce taxes, liberalise exchange rates control, reduce regulations, privatise state-owned industries and diminish the trade union's power, Thatcher undertook a comprehensive neoliberal policy agenda based on the monetarist imperative. She raised value added tax and imposed new taxes on North Sea oil. She abolished local taxes and replaced them with a 'poll tax' or a 'community charge' per head basis in order to reduce the local governments' authority. She also adopted exchange rate targets (Steger & Roy, 2010, p. 40). As part of privatisation, her government sold the national freight corporation, British aerospace, British rail, British airports authority, British petroleum, British steel, vast amount of public housing units, and several water and power utilities. Under her regime new rules and regulations were introduced in the trading system in order to turn the London stock exchange into global financial centre (ibid).

With a massive electoral triumph, Tony Blair, the leader of the Labour Party, became Prime Minister in 1997 and formulated the 'Third Way'⁵ policy aimed to resolve middle class problems with business interest. He adopted a comprehensive macro-economic framework for taxation and spending practices in order to enhance global competitiveness. Furthermore, he introduced a code for fiscal stability within a

⁵ The Third Way involves a balance between regulation and deregulation, on transnational as well as national and local levels; and balance between the economic and non-economic life of the society. The second of these is at least as important as the first, but attained in some part through it (Giddens, 1998, cited Steger & Roy, 2010, p. 66).

neoliberal mode of governance which ensured investors that his government was committed to managing the coffers of the state (ibid).

Ronald Reagan, who was elected as the President of the US in 1981, adopted a 'supply-side-oriented' programme, such as combating high rates of unemployment. In order to overcome stagflation of the American economy he emphasised reducing the marginal tax rate for generating enough revenue to operate public programmes. Based on public choice theory an effort was made to introduce 'new federalism' which was inspired by the neoliberal policies of decentralisation and individual choice. A decentralised government can handle market and economy efficiently. As part of the deregulations, Reagan deregulated telecommunication industries, savings and loans Industries, and privatised large portions of federally-owned land. Furthermore, major reforms were made in social policies and programmes, for instance aid to families with dependent children, school lunch programmes, and Medicaid were dropped from the states' support (ibid).

In Latin America, particularly in Chile, the neoliberal policy agenda was adopted by the military dictator Augusto Pinochet who in 1973 captured state power through the eviction, backed by the US troops, of the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende (Davidson-Hardson & Schugurnsky, 2009). Pinochet introduced a set of economic policies recommended by a group of economists known as 'Chicago Boys,' loyal to Milton Friedman, who "equated free market with social and political freedom" (Harvey, 2005; Davidson-Hardson & Schugurnsky, 2009, p. 13). The State Department, several large American corporations, and the Ford Foundation introduced different neoliberal academic programmes in Latin America, such as the 'Chile Project' which helped to train Chilean economic students according to free market principles (Steger & Roy, 2010, p. 100). Similarly to Chile, the military junta of Argentina seized power from the democratically elected government in 1976 and maintained a close relationship with the 'Chicago Boys'. After the collapse of the military regime, the new government adopted a new form of neoliberal economic policies, such as deregulation measures in

order to promote trade and privatise the state-owned industries, including the national oil company, the post office, and public utilities (ibid).

In Asia, particularly in Southeast Asia, market-oriented ideology increased in the early 1990s. However, Deng Xiaoping, the Chinese President, had already taken initiatives to liberalise the communist-ruled economy in 1978 (Harvey, 2005). He offered an alternative model, state-socialism-plus-market, in the light of the neoliberal criteria of efficiency, productivity, and competitiveness. Privatisation of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) was a major part of economic restructuring under the Deng regime. Because of such economic restructuring, the gap between urban and rural workers has increased steadily in China. China also took the initiative to open up some SOEs to foreign ownership and manipulated the exchange rate "in order to increase the competitiveness of its global exports" (Steger & Roy, 2010, p. 87).

3.5 Neoliberalism and International Financial Institutions

The neoliberal policy agenda closely relates to the worldwide activities of international financial institutions (IFIs). Torres (2009) argues that the international agencies, for instance, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and some agencies of the United Nations, including the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and perhaps the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), are working to promote a neoliberal policy agenda around the globe. The IFIs, particularly the IMF, the World Bank, and regional development banks, have provided significant amounts of money to the developing world in the name of aid. The World Bank alone has lent US\$300 billion to the developing world since the early 1950s with economic reformation policies, such as the structural adjustment programme, which generally can be described as a broad range of policies including privatisation, liberalisation and the free market economy efficiency prescribed by the IFIs (Torres, 2009).

Neoliberalism is often mentioned synonymously with the 'Washington Consensus' that "refers to the 'lowest common denominator of policy advice' directed at mostly Latin American countries by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and other Washington-based international institutions and think tanks" (Steger & Roy, 2010, p. 19). It has a ten-point programme which includes a list of factors and ideas that are required for the 'global south' to achieve economic development. The ten points include fiscal discipline and control of the budget deficit, reduction of public expenditure, tax reform, financial liberalisation, competitive exchange rates, trade liberalisation, promotion of foreign direct investment, privatisation of state enterprises, deregulation of the economy and protection of property rights (ibid).

The main mechanism through which neoliberal economic reforms were introduced and operated in the world have been the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) followed by the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The WTO started in 1995 and functions as a judicialised trading system that is used to make consensus between power blocks and remove obstacles to deregulate the markets. A set of international rules has been mutually adopted by the powerful countries with a view to create space for multilateral economic organisations in the world trading system (Munck, 2005).

Some revisions have been made in the neoliberal Washington consensus since the 1990s. However, free trade remains the main issue of this policy agenda. Trade policy is not only confined to tariff reduction, but also addresses the institutional, legal and political reforms that are coordinated by the WTO. "The WTO seeks to bring about international harmonisation of institutional, regulatory and legal standards through a variety of agreements and standards. Trade policy, therefore, now extends to issues previously considered to be beyond the realm of international trade, such as domestic investment, intellectual property and legal reform" (Deraniyagala, 2005, p. 100).

3.6 Neoliberalism in the Higher Education Sector around the World

Within a short period, every sector has been reshaped and dominated by neoliberalism in the developed world, especially the United States and the United Kingdom, and around the world (Small, 2009). Education is treated as a further sector where a neoliberal policy agenda can be incorporated. As Ross & Gibson (2007) argue, "public education is under attack in North America and across the globe as a result of neo-liberal government policies" (p. 4). Over the last two decades, education in the United States and elsewhere has undergone a profound transformation (Hursh, 2007). In 2002, the then President George W. Bush, introduced the "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) Act of 2002 in order to reshape the American education sector. Because of its requirements for testing, state funding of school and system of accountability this act is considered to be a key neoliberal and neoconservative business-oriented education policy (Lipman, 2007).

The neoliberal policy agenda has spread into the education sector throughout the western world over the last two decades. The United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand are the five Western countries that are most often mentioned as examples for having incorporated neoliberal ideas into their social policy sector. With the exception of Canada, they all also have marketised their school systems (Roberts, 2007; Hill, 2007). According to Ross & Gibson (2007), there are three processes of integrating neoliberalism in the education sector. First, the educational services market is opened up to profit based educational management through international trade and investment agreement, such as the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). Second, educational costs are reduced. This reduction often happens through downsizing, such as closing school libraries, reducing the number of special needs teachers and increasing class sizes. Third, curriculum standards and "accountability" are created (p. 4). Torres (2009) points out that the main agenda of neoliberalism in education is to privatise and decentralise public education, set

educational narrow standards, develop purely quantitative testing of academic achievement, and call for accountability on the basis of a narrow range of outcomes.

Carnoy (1999) identifies three types of educational reform. The first type, *competition based reforms*, emphasises the decentralisation of educational governance and administration of school, develops new educational norms and standards which are measured through rigorous testing, introduces new teaching and learning methods in order to improve performance at low costs, and improves the selection and training of teachers. The second type, *reforms based on financial imperatives*, is prescribed by the international financial organisations as a pre-condition of providing loans to countries. Various strategies are used including financial transference from primary to higher education, privatisation of elementary and secondary education in order to increase family contribution for their children's education, and cost-reduction by increasing the teacher-student ratio. The third type of reform, the *equity-based reform*, "seems to be simply a smokescreen, an add-on to the first two as their main legitimation" (cited in Torres, 2009, p.17).

Hursh (2007) explains that two forces played a great role in spreading neoliberalism around the world. Other countries, particularly developing countries, are forced to take up neoliberal policy as the developed countries adopt it, and consequently adopt a neoliberal policy agenda in their national economic development in order to fulfill the conditions set by the World Bank and IMF for getting loans and aids. As a criterion of getting financial support from IFIs, developing countries are forced to adjust to the neoliberal policy agenda in their socioeconomic development. Although the education sector was not the prime focus of IFIs until the 1970s, their view changed in the 1980s. In the 1960s, a bank vice-president, Robert Gardner, declared that the World Bank was not supposed to lend for education and health service since these are government and not bank responsibilities (Caufield, 1996, 64, cited in Leher, 2004). The World Bank emphasises the specific educational policies: "the construction of schools, support to secondary education, vocational and technical education, non-formal education, and

more recently, basic education and educational quality" (Torres, 2009, p. 33). Through various agreements (for instance, GATS, which came into force on January 1, 1995) the WTO aims to liberalise trade in services. In this way developing countries are led to import the neoliberal agenda into their own development policy. As Matheson (2000) points out "the WTO aims to liberalize the service sector further. The immediate impact would be the privatization of some services that have so far been provided by governments. Governments would be obliged to sell off such services as housing, education and water" (cited in Hill, 2007, p. 122).

Initially, the attempt to incorporate the neoliberal policy agenda was made primarily in the primary and secondary education sector. In universities, overt privatisation has mainly targeted non-educational aspects such as catering and security (Levidow, 2007). From the 1980s, it has been a worldwide trend for universities to adopt commercial models of knowledge, skills, curriculum, finance, accounting, and management organisation (ibid). Entrepreneurial practices are adopted in many universities in North America in which the universities not only develop profit-making activities but also become business partners (ibid). Two major changes have been made in the American higher education system. Firstly, there was a concern and focus on improving teaching, raising standards, improving curriculum, and secondly, an attempt to deal with "how to cope with diminishing resources and rising costs" (Johnstone, 1997, p. 133). Many universities in America have adapted business models, cutting costs, reducing academic activities, increasing faculty teaching responsibility, and privatising various institutional functions (ibid). Similarly, higher education institutions in the United Kingdom are treated as borderless businesses (Levidow, 2007). Government funds for the universities were reduced substantially while Thatcher was the prime minister of the United Kingdom. At the same time the first research assessment exercise was carried out in all universities in 1986 (Edwards, 1997). In the late 1990s, the United Kingdom government abolished students' maintenance grants and introduced tuition fees (Levidow, 2007).

Since the late 1980s, Australian higher education has been commercialised, targeting foreign students for generating export revenue (Marginson, 2006a). Higher education in Australia is the second most internationalised enrolment and third largest services export, "earning \$3.5 billion in 2002 from international student spending on fees, food, transport, accommodation, living costs and entertainment, on and offshore" (Nelson 2003b, cited in Marginson, 2006a, p.10). Marginson (2006a) argues that all universities in Australia are directed by the market-driven policy in which the government seeks to prevent negative marketing between universities. Domestic postgraduate students in non-research degrees are charged the commercial fees. All doctoral programmes are designed to catch up more foreign students in a cross-border market. "Within the national system, institutions compete for research funding via merit-based academic schemes, targeted public and private sector projects, consultancy and philanthropy; and also tuition revenues from international and postgraduate students, short courses and continuing professional education" (ibid, p. 9).

Based on the 'Third Way' approach, the government of New Zealand, a country once known as the laboratory of welfare of the world, adapted the neoliberal policy agenda more than two decades ago (Roberts, 2004; Peters & Marshall, 1996; Peters & Roberts, 1999; Olssen, 2002, cited in Roberts, 2009). In 2002, the New Zealand government prepared a five-year strategic plan, the *Tertiary Education Strategy*, for the higher education sector. Later a second document entitled the *Tertiary Education Strategy, 2007-2012*, was prepared by the government in 2007. In the strategic plan, the government aims is to "create high income, knowledge-based, innovative and creative economy" (Roberts, 2009, p. 413). In the late 1990s a 'Bright Future Package' was introduced based on the notion of the knowledge society to improve innovation, skill development, enterprise and international economic competitiveness (Roberts, 2004). Both the *Tertiary Education Strategies* are incompatible with the neoliberal policy agenda in which a knowledge economy society is treated as the most enviable agenda to be achieved (Roberts, 2004; Roberts, 2009).

In promoting a neoliberal agenda in the higher education sector, the World Bank is providing all the necessary support to developing countries. The key features of this policy are privatisation, deregulation, and marketisation of the higher education sector. Johnstone et al. (1998) point out:

The reform agenda ... is oriented to the market rather than to public ownership or to the governmental planning and regulation. Underlying the market orientation of tertiary education is the ascendance, almost worldwide, of market capitalism and the principles of neoliberal economics (cited in Levidow, 2005, p. 157).

In the higher education sector, the neoliberal agenda proposes four major areas for reforms. These are efficiency and accountability of the university, accreditation and universalisation, international competitiveness, and privatisation (Juan, 2002, cited in Torres, 2009). In order to incorporate the neoliberal policy agenda in the higher education sector in Mexico, the World Bank (1998) proposed ten recommendations, namely to introduce a large amount of registration fees, to charge full fees for room and board, introduce a mechanism to investigate economic resources for student loans and grants, introduce student loans based on the market interest, introduce private companies to collect student loans, impose graduation fees and implement them, promote philanthropy, ensure entrepreneurial training for improving quality education, offer for sale research project findings and training courses, and increase the number of private institutions with a decrease in public education (cited in Delgado-Ramos & Saxe-Fernández, 2009).

Following the neoliberal policy agenda in the higher education sector, the role of higher education institutes is gradually constrained. According to Mathison and Ross (2002) "the university's role as an independent institution is increasingly threatened by the interests of corporations in both subtle and obvious ways ...decreased funding for higher education has made universities increasingly susceptible to the influence of big money and threatens the academic and direction of research" (cited in Hill, 2007, p. 117). As a consequence of neoliberalism, higher education is being transformed from public to

private institutions, in which students and families are forced to pay more for education (Harms, 2007).

3.7 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I addressed the theoretical paradigm of neoliberalism and its implications around the world. I started the discussion by describing the ideological responses of neoliberalism. I traced how neoliberalism as a political and economic discourse is being used by the developed world and how the developing world is being forced to adopt the neoliberal hegemonic discourse into the development sectors with the support of the developed world and their allies. In most cases, the neoliberal hegemony is manifested in the developing world by authoritarian governments with the support of IFIs and developed countries. Finally, I discussed how the neoliberal policy agenda has entered the service sectors. As part of the neoliberal reformation, the higher education sector is targeted to make profit around the globe.

In the next chapter, I discuss the socioeconomic and political context of Bangladesh in order to address how neoliberalism is manifested there. The chapter also discusses how the neoliberal policy agenda has entered into the development sectors along with the higher education sector in Bangladesh.

Chapter Four: Socioeconomic and Political Context, and Neoliberal Turn of Various Sectors in Bangladesh

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the overall socioeconomic and political scenarios of Bangladesh are examined and the historical, cultural and social norms and values of the people are identified as unique, nurtured for thousands of years back. However, over recent decades people have experienced chronic poverty and a growing gap between rich and poor. The political turmoil after independence in 1975 particularly that which was caused by military regimes, helped to incorporate a neoliberal policy agenda in various sectors in the mid-1970s. However democratic governments are continuing reformations in the development sectors with the support of the international financial institutions (IFIs). In the name of a knowledge economy society, the neoliberal policy agenda has been applied to the higher education sector since the 1990s.

4.2 Socioeconomic and Political Scenarios of Bangladesh

Bangladesh, the world's largest deltaic river region, earned independence through a bloodshed struggle against Pakistan in 1971, sacrificing the lives of 3 million people. With a long historical and cultural heritage, diversified demographic pattern, and plurality in society, it attracted people from different regions of the world. "Bangladesh has not only been a melting pot where civilizations rose and perished and races waxed and waned; it is also a microcosm of religious, ethnic, ideological and political pluralism"(Khan, 2007, p. 124). The cultural and social norms, values, customs, and belief system are ingrained within pluralism and diversity (ibid).

The country is the home of 157.8 million people, almost half of them, 49.6%, are living under the poverty line (United Nations Development Programme, 2009). The government claims that the national head count index of poverty measured by the upper

poverty line declined from 56.6% in 1991-92 to 40% in 2005. 19.5% of the population lives in remote areas and suffers from extreme poverty. In addition, about 25-30 million people live in chronic poverty (Government of Bangladesh, 2009). Only 28.1% of people live in cities (United Nations Development Programme, 2009).

Over the last four decades the gap between rich and poor has increased steadily. Today, 5% of the population earns 50% of the country's total income (Barakat, 2003). Society is highly class-based and a large middle class (at least 33% of total population) influences the overall socioeconomic and political structure of Bangladesh. It is often argued that the middle class had a great role in different events of the country and played the progressive role in preserving the indigenous culture. However, they are the most fragile and vacillating group of the society and tend to escape from difficult situations (Barakat, n.d.).

In a recent Labour Force Survey (2005-06), it was reported that the total labour force of the country is 49.5 million people, of which 37.3 million are male and 12.1 million are female. Nearly 50% of the labour force is working in the agricultural sector that contributes about 22% to the gross domestic product (GDP) (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2008). The readymade garments (RMG) sector is the biggest earning source of foreign currency. On the other hand, the country's economy depends heavily on remittance from abroad which has declined due to recent global financial crisis (United Nations Development Programme, 2009).

There are mainly three types of education systems operating in Bangladesh: general education, *Madrassa*⁶ education, and English education. Both general and *Madrassa* education systems follow the separate curriculum and examination systems prescribed by the government. The English education system follows the British curriculum and examination system. The majority of people still do not have access to higher education

⁶ The *Madrassa* education was introduced by the Muslim rulers during the medieval period in the Indian subcontinent in order to train personnel for government service. The *Madrassa* education is mainly Muslim religion-centric, and subjects and curriculum are related to Islam.

due to the financial crisis; only 4% of the populations are able to get higher education (University Grant Commission, 2006). The educational attainments at primary and post-primary are 82.9%, and 12.9% respectively, whereas the combined gross enrolment rate in education is 52.1%. The public expenditure on education is not more than 14.2% (United Nations Development Programme, 2009). Only 2.3% of GDP is spent on the education sector (Barakat, 2003).

Bangladesh started with a multiparty parliamentary democracy system since its inception. However, the democratic system was interrupted by the military invasion in 1975 and the conflict that continued till 1990. After the restoration of democracy in 1991, a number of elections were held at both national and local levels until a military-backed government captured power in 2007 (Kabeer & Kabir, 2009). Since 2009 a democratic government has been formed again through a national election. The transition to democracy after fifteen years of military rule has changed various spheres in society (Karim, 2004). A two-party system was established in the political arena and they have ruled the country alternately since the 1990s. Other political parties have little impact on society, except when in a coalition with the two major parties. The constitution of Bangladesh was founded in 1972 based on four pillars - nationalism, democracy, socialism, and secularism, but significant changes were made during the military regimes. These included a new interpretation of socialism, now meaning economic and social justice. Secularism was omitted and Islam overtly became the state religion while ensuring full freedom of practice to other religions (Khan, 2007).

4.3 The Neoliberal Policy Agenda in Various Sectors in Bangladesh

As a result of mounting pressure from the IFIs and the economic and political interests of the ruling civil-military elites, Bangladesh adopted neoliberal policies in various sectors of the economy in the early 1980s. Officially, such policies were introduced through the reforms underwritten by the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs). These mainly concentrated on deregulation, reducing government control and

liberalisation of the economy (Rahman, 2003). Nevertheless, it is often argued that a pro-market economic policy was started in Bangladesh in December 1975 by the military junta overthrowing the post-independence socialist government (Nuruzzaman, 2004). Fahimul Quadir (2000) described the political economic context of the neoliberal policy agenda in Bangladesh as follows: "The post-1975 military and bureaucratic elite, in their attempt to build up political coalitions, preferred to draft the business and industrial community into the ruling class, who eventually capitalised on the reforms to expand the horizons of their personal wealth and resources" (ibid, cited in Nuruzzaman, 2004, p. 43). Quadir's explanation draws attention to the process, however, of how external factors play a significant role in the formulation of neoliberal policy in various sectors as well. Nuruzzaman (2004) argues that the military regime of the late President General Ziaur Rahman had security, political, and economic reasons to initiate a shift from a socialist to a capitalist path of development. However, evidence suggests that the donors' pressure played a major role in accepting the privatisation model. The market-oriented adjustment strategy was then adopted by various post-1975 military governments (ibid). After the assassination of the country's founder and President, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975, a coalition emerged among the military elites, civil bureaucrats, business and industrial communities and external forces, particularly the donor agencies. A combination of these vested interest groups worked for a neoliberal policy agenda in Bangladesh. "As far back as 1975, Bangladesh received less foreign aid, but in the post-Sheikh Mujib period foreign aid began to pour into the country in massive volumes and the numbers of indentors began to rise dramatically", which provided an environment with benefits for these vested interest groups (ibid, p. 41).

According to Ahmad (n. d.), Bangladesh enjoyed the support of the structural adjustment facilities (SAF) and the extended structural adjustment facilities (ESAF) by implementing the SAPs since 1982. Bangladesh has been credited with carrying out one of the most rapid tariff liberalisation and privatisation programmes as well as carrying out policy reforms in the financial and fiscal sectors in this region. The economy

was liberalised through the introduction of a series of market-friendly policies and the reorganisation of the industrial sector through privatisation. These are the evident examples of neoliberal policies. Bhattacharya et al. (1999) point out:

The principal policy instruments of the SAPs in Bangladesh included, *inter alia*, cutback in public sector expenditure, reduction of anti-export bias in the tax structure, tariff rationalisation and overall trade liberalisation, incorporation of flexibility in the exchange and interest rates, privatisation, price decontrol and de-subsidization (p. 6).

Between 1988/89 and 1995/96 a total of US\$1.76 billion was disbursed in Bangladesh as part of the World Bank's adjustment lending. This was mainly channeled through structural and sectoral adjustment credits. Notable among these were the energy sector adjustment credit (1989, SDR 137.0 million), the industrial sector adjustment credit (1987, SDR 147.8 million), and the financial sector adjustment credit (1990, SDR, 132.7 million) (Rahman, 2003). The pace of reforms in Bangladesh has been faster than in any other country in South Asia. Nuruzzaman (2004) points out that whereas Bangladesh started to implement massive economic reforms from the early 1980s, India and Pakistan only commenced them in the late 1980s.

Since then the government of Bangladesh has implemented various reform policies in the industrial sector, particularly in the jute manufacturing sector to fulfill the conditions of the IFIs. Industrial policies were revised and new ones were formulated to address the demands of the IFIs. They identified public sectors as burdens with a huge loss of public money. Accordingly many jute industries have not only been privatised, but also been closed down, resulting in an increase in the rate of unemployment. Evidence suggests that the privatisation programme has failed to ensure its promised goals (Bhaskar & Khan, 1995). Some studies documented that entrepreneurs use privatised public property for other purposes to maximise capital without taking the risks that exist in manufacturing industries (Sen, 1997). The jute industries employed a total of 250,000 workers in nearly 80 mills in the early 1970s. Due to the neoliberal reorganisation, these

figures decreased to less than 50,000 by 2008. *Adamjee* Jute Mills, the biggest employer in the industrial sector, was closed down in 2001. The industrial city of Khulna, which was the home of a number of jute mills, is not an industrial bloc of the country anymore. Eight state-owned jute mills in Khulna city have been closed down in 2007 due to the reform packages of the IFIs.

The agricultural sector is one of the major areas where the neoliberal policy agenda was introduced during the 1980s and the 1990s. The agricultural inputs business is now completely privatised, as private sector businesses control trade in the fertiliser, the seed import and distribution, and the agricultural machinery businesses (Nuruzzaman, 2004). Bangladesh has reduced subsidies in the agricultural sector, even though 80% of the population is involved in this sector. Subsidies on food and fertilizers were drastically reduced from 12% and 26% in the period 1977-84 to 4% and 1% in 1985-92 respectively (Ahmed, 2002, cited in Nuruzzaman, 2004, p. 46).

Privatisation is part of the agenda of the SAPs largely because the public sector was claimed to be an inefficient sector enlarging the arbitrary power of the government (Ahmad, n. d.). The financial sector reform was implemented during the early 1980s because of the allegation of inefficient management of the banking sector. The process was begun through the denationalisation of the *Uttara* Bank and the *Pubali* Bank, and a number of private commercial banks were given licenses. As Bhattacharya (2002) points out, "it was also during the mid-1980s that the money, banking and credit commission came into being to define the scope and modalities of the early phase of reforms" (p.3). In the beginning of the 1990s, the intensive financial sector reforms began under the World Bank-assisted financial sector adjustment credit (FSAC) (ibid). To address the issue of efficiency, again as Bhattacharya (2002) points out:

The FSAC of the World Bank also set some objectives in 1990 like gradual deregulation of interest rate structure, providing market-oriented incentives, making subsidies more transparent, adoption of an appropriate monetary policy,

improvement of debt recovery climate, and strengthening the capital markets to pace up the reforms process (p.4).

With the fast pace of the reform policies, the neoliberal policy agenda could not address the huge loan defaulters in the financial sector. In fact, the huge loan default has become the biggest problem in the country's financial sector (ibid). The defaulters have had control over the banking and insurance sector of the country and "this small group of banking and insurance bourgeoisie continued to flourish further and turned into the Bangladeshi equivalent of "robber barons" of nineteenth century Europe"(Nuruzzaman, 2004, p. 41).

4.4 The Neoliberal Shifts in the Higher Education Sector in Bangladesh

Shifts towards neoliberalism in the higher education sector in Bangladesh started in the 1990s (Kabir, 2010). The government promulgated the Private University Act 1992 on August 9, 1992. It states that well-wishing persons, associations, charitable funds, or institutions of the country can set up private universities with the permission of the government. In order to establish a private university, several conditions need to be fulfilled. In a provisional manner, a private university may initially, after prior consent of the government, be established anywhere, but it needs to be established on its own campus on no less than five acres of land with sufficient infrastructure within five years after the date of the provisional establishment (Ministry of Education, 1992). In April 1998, the government amended the Private University Act 1992. Recently, the Private University Act 1992 was repealed and the new Private University Act 2010 was introduced by the government. The law brings some major changes to the regulations of private universities which are detailed in the following chapter.

In 2006, the University Grant Commission (UGC) with the technical and financial support of the World Bank formulated a "Strategic Plan for Higher Education 2006-2026" (SPHE), a twenty-year strategic plan for the higher education sector (University Grant Commission, 2006). On March 23, 2005, the Ministry of Education formed a

'Strategic Planning Committee' (SPC). The goal of the six expert groups and the commission's chairman as the head of the committee was to formulate a ten-year SPHE as prescribed by the World Bank (New Age, 2005a). After a series of meetings between the government and the World Bank representatives, the World Bank allocated US\$100 million for the reformation of the higher education sector (Amadersomoy, April 22, 2005, cited in Ovimot, 2006). As part of the reformation, the UGC initiated plans to formulate a twenty-year SPHE. Earlier in December 2004, the World Bank identified seven major crises in this sector and therefore made some recommendations to the government as conditions to its financial and technical support in developing the sector. The three-member World Bank delegations identified the problems after a review and analysis of the present state of the public and private higher educational institutes. The problems mainly included the decline of the quality of higher education, and limitations of the existing legal framework of both public and private universities. The review and analysis was based on visits to these institutions from December 3 to December 11. The analysis and review of the Bank delegates was followed by the Education Ministry's request for assistance in developing a ten-year strategic plan for higher education (New Age, 2005a). At the end, the UGC formulated a twenty-year SPHE.

On March 17, 2009, under the theme of 'Education for the Knowledge Economy' (EKE), the World Bank approved a US\$ 91.5 million International Development Association (IDA) credit to improve the quality and relevance of teaching and research in higher education institutions within the following four years. The project has four components: promoting academic innovation, building institutional capacity, raising the connectivity capacity of the higher education sector, and project management. The objectives of the first component are to "establish enabling conditions to enhance the quality and relevance of teaching, learning and research in universities; and introduce an efficient instrument for the allocation of additional public funds to universities with an emphasis on innovation and accountability" (World Bank, 2009, p. 5; University Grant Commission, 2010a). The objective of the second component is to enhance and improve strategic and institutional capacity both in the UGC and universities. The

objective of the third component is to disenclave Bangladesh universities and to integrate them in the globalized world of knowledge. The main activity will be the establishment of the Bangladesh Research and Education Network (BdREN). By subscription to various libraries the project will also facilitate access to the global repository of knowledge (World Bank, 2009; University Grant Commission, 2010a). Finally, the fourth component aims to ensure proper implementation, management, monitoring and evaluation of the project.

4.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I addressed the socio-cultural issues of Bangladeshi society in a historical perspective. Later the discussion was turned to address the current economic and political context of Bangladesh. In order to explore the context of the neoliberal policy agenda in the country I explored the relationship between the power elite, and the developed world and their allies. The neoliberal discourse was strongly evident into most sectors in the early 1980s, but the higher education sectors adopted it by enacting the Private University Act in 1992. In keeping with this trend I have examined how various neoliberal policy projects have been taken into the higher education sector in Bangladesh.

In the next chapter I explore the neoliberal transformation of the higher education sector in Bangladesh. Based on the views of the participants I interviewed, and on data drawn from national and institutional documents, the press and further examination of the literature, the chapter explores the diverse characteristics of neoliberal transformation of higher education in Bangladesh.

Chapter Five: Neoliberal Transformation of Higher Education in Bangladesh: Perceptions of Key Stakeholders

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I extend my critical analysis of the tertiary sector in Bangladesh by drawing on the perceptions of key stakeholders in the sector. The chapter is structured into two subsections: neoliberal hegemony and ideological transformation of higher education, and neoliberalism and knowledge-based economy. The first subsection is concerned with the complex nature of the ideological change in higher education within a neoliberal hegemony. In the second subsection I explore how higher education is linked with notions of a knowledge-based economy and of global capital.

The roles of the participants have been described in Chapter Two. Often participants' perceptions of specific issues differed because of their various experiences and understandings. However, most of the participants stated that the private universities increase marketisation of higher education, and acknowledged that some private universities do provide quality education. For the most part the participants considered that the trend of marketisation in higher education decreases its quality and therefore higher education is increasingly becoming a commodity. The participants stated that the current higher education system has been changed in response to the global market. Moreover, some participants observed that such change influences society negatively. Some participants, particularly senior officials of the University Grant Commission (UGC) and politicians of the mainstream party, stated that involvement of international financial organisations (IFIs) in the higher education sector will help to improve it. However, other participants, particularly leftist party activists, student activists, members of faculties, engaged in a strong critique of the philosophical and political agenda of IFIs in the sector. The participants, especially students, stated that they were influenced by the market orientation in higher education and believed that there is a relationship

between higher education and job markets. Conversely, participants, especially the student activists, stated that the ways universities have adopted various policies, such as increasing tuition fees and introducing growing numbers of evening courses, had developed popular resistance to the direction of the higher education sector.

5.2 Neoliberal Hegemony and Ideological Transformation of Higher Education

5.2.1 Higher education: a legacy of colonial education and mentality

One of the participants, sociologist Professor Ahkam, stated, "We are continuing colonial education in different masks". It is often argued that Bangladesh started the 'decolonisation' process in education through the establishment of the first education commission in 1974 based on the four *pillars of the nation* - nationalism, socialism, democracy, and secularism (Ministry of Education, 1974). The 'decolonisation' process of education soon stagnated due to the continuing legacy of colonial education. In fact the colonial past still influences the intellectual and academic life of teachers and students and the education sector as a whole in Bangladesh (Altbach, 2008). The monetarist pressure of neoliberalism now constitutes a new form of colonialism. The neoliberal process of higher education has been reinforced in recent years by the ever increasing influence of globalisation. In order to accumulate capital, the higher education system is formulated in relation to the flow of capital, and thus societal-based higher education is gradually disappearing. "Such education hampers the flow of capital, and stops capitalists accumulating capital. Such education would be dysfunctional and would become redundant", said Professor Ahkam. As a result, although public universities are still following the British higher education system model to some extent, public universities are intending to introduce semester systems and four year honours degrees in order to attract students and fill job markets. Similarly, private universities are seen by the participants as pioneers in introducing the North American tertiary model into the higher education sector. Modeling on the North American education

model, private universities have made changes in the contents, curriculum and the examination systems. As another participant, Professor Rahman, high official of UGC, commented:

Our public universities have followed the British model and to some extent the British-Indian subcontinent model, but private universities have introduced the North American education model. They have changed it radically; they have introduced a semester system, the English-medium instruction and North American curriculum. When they recruit teachers, they prefer North American degrees.

Some participants stated that there have been two reasons for the incorporation of the North American model by the private universities. Firstly, they wanted to ensure their graduates are competitive in the job market since the American model of higher education dominates the job market globally. Secondly, private universities wanted to attract the enrolment of students of the upper class. As private education is expensive, most of the students of private universities come from the rich class who are influenced by American culture and the American educational system. Therefore, the rich class prefers the North American education system for their children. Leaders of the private universities have targeted the aspirations of the rich class sentiment in order to make private universities in Bangladesh flourish.

The notion of western democracy and capitalist values is treated as the dominant model of development and knowledge throughout the higher education system in Bangladesh (Ake, 1979). Therefore, students of both public and private universities throughout of the world are treating the western education system as relevant and useful. Often students are influenced by western scholars and the western knowledge system, and indigenous institutions and their higher education system are positioned as traditional and backward. As Hasan, an undergraduate student of a private university, said:

The American International University of Bangladesh (AIUB) is one of the best private universities in Bangladesh. I study here and I know what they teach. My relatives are studying in the best public university in Bangladesh and therefore I also know what the quality of a Bangladeshi university should be. Considering every side, a foreign university is best. Bangladesh's education system is so bad. I studied in the English education system up to higher secondary level and I like it ... I wanted to study in any top university in the world, such as McGill, MIT. Always I wanted to study abroad and still now I have the same feeling but I don't know what will happen.

Students tend to judge the standard of higher education in Bangladesh as low quality in comparison to that of western universities. Often students feel that the standard of higher education in Bangladesh is declining steadily; they suffer from an inferiority complex about their own education system. That myth, which was formed by colonialism and later driven by the free market forces of capitalism (Pike, 2008), shapes the students' cultural and academic life. Powerful stories are developed in society featuring how the western world dominates the social, political, cultural and economic system of the global world. Students believe that the English language is an important element in their whole life. In order to be involved in a global system universities are incorporating the English language as the medium of instruction rather than the mother tongue, Bengali. Rohini, an undergraduate student of a public university said:

The medium of instruction is English ... English is better for higher education since I am intending to get MBA from abroad... certainly I will need to know English ... I will have to speak in English while I will start my career.

Within the higher education system a hierarchy of knowledge and of institutions has unfolded between public and private education, general and *Madrasa* education, business and non-business subjects and Bengali medium and English medium. The notion of hierarchy leads students, teachers, and institutions to be involved in unhealthy competition, tending to develop a kind of inferiority complex among them. Private

universities use the English language as a medium of instruction in order to give the impression that they deliver a western education system whether students understand the language or not. As a junior faculty member of a private university, Kaniz said, "When I presented everything in English in an admission test students could not understand what I was saying. I don't know why private universities are worried about English language". Similarly, the concepts of 'traditional' and 'modern' are developed in the higher education system based on areas of study and educational institutions. As a participant, sociologist Professor Ahkam, said, "We call someone as elite who gets an English education and call someone as traditional who attains a *Madrassa* education". Higher education is embedded into the structure of capitalism and works as a tool of cultural domination. The whole process is leading the people to adopt what Said (1979) calls 'orientalism' in their mind. Another participant, sociologist Professor Sharma, said:

The current generation, particularly the upper class and upper middle class, would like to see themselves as the model of western society due to cultural imperialism ... Students in my class stay for significant hours because I come from USA rather than because I am a leftist. It is important for students that I speak in English.

The neoliberal model of higher education leads students to develop negative attitudes to their own culture and historical heritage, which in turn affects students' self esteem, self confidence, and contributes to the changing of students' own identity (Battiste, 2008; Kabir, 2011). Students are becoming less confident about their future life. Those students who are studying in market related subjects often develop self-confidence about their ability to get jobs, but less confidence about their own historical and cultural heritage. As Hasan said, "Literature and history never attract me. I rarely read any story, novel, poetry or history. Those who are fascinated by literature are living in a traditional world. Their dress, thinking pattern and speaking style are very much old fashioned".

***5.2.2 Neoliberal policies in the higher education sector: the nexus between the international financial institutions (IFIs) and 'the power elite'*⁷**

Some participants stated their belief that the IFIs have an overall privatisation project for every sector all over the world. Historically, as well as philosophically, the neoliberal policy agenda has been linked with the structural adjustment policy (SAP) in which a broad range of policies are recommended by the IFIs for development sectors in Bangladesh. Through reforms in policy, the power elite made easy access for IFIs into the higher education sector. The similarity in ideological goals between IFIs and the power elite help them to work together. The IFIs' involvement in the higher education sector started earlier in 1985 with the support of the power elite. "The institute of business administration's (IBA) expansion at the University of Dhaka was my project. That was the first World Bank intervention in the higher education sector in 1984. The World Bank provided computers and constructed buildings for IBA", said Noman Sayed, ex-World Bank staff member and ex-Education Minister. A range of broader neoliberal policies have been incorporated while a group of members of the power elite including bureaucrats, businessmen, ex-officers of IFIs, teachers, civil society members advocated to open up the higher education sector for the private sector. Often those in the power elite also convinced the government to take loans from the World Bank for the higher education sector. As a government bureaucrat, Dilruba, said, "Bangladeshi people are working in the World Bank who may influence the government to take loans under 'Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project' (HEQEP) ... It is somehow difficult to get government money, but you can get money from the World Bank easily".

Introducing private universities was the first combined intervention of the power elite in which they not only concentrated on the managerial and administrative side of the

⁷ I use C Wright Mills' concept of the 'power elite'. According to Mills (1956) "the power elite is composed of men ... in positions to make decisions having major consequences ... they are in command of major hierarchies and organizations of modern society. They rule the big corporations. They rule the machinery of the state and claim its prerogatives. They direct the military establishment. They occupy the strategic command posts of the social structure, in which now are centered the effective means of the power and the wealth and the celebrity which they enjoy" (cited in Barrow, 2007, p. 404).

university, but also emphasised market economy and liberal democracy through higher education. The strong advocacy of the power elite successfully convinced the government to open up higher education to the private sector by enacting the Private University Act in 1992. An ex-bureaucrat initiated the opening of a private university in Bangladesh. He used his ties in the government, business, teachers, and civil society community to convince the government to approve the establishment of a university in the private sector (Ahmad, 2004). As a participant, Professor Azim, a former vice chancellor (VC) of a public university, but currently performing the role of VC of a private university, said:

...civil society and their allies took the initiative and played a pivotal role in establishing the private university in Bangladesh. They thought that a private university can operate along with the public university ... they came to us to convince the teacher association of the University of Dhaka ... I was the president of the association. After talking with them we (the teacher association) set a meeting with the then Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia ... We told madam (Begum Zia) that huge numbers of university students are going abroad, especially to neighbouring country for higher education due to limited seats in the public universities. The Public universities could accommodate only 60% of the students. Therefore it is wasteful of foreign currency ... As the government could not ensure higher education for the students entirely due to money constraints, it should be opened to the private sector.

The participants said that the power elite influenced the government to amend a makeshift law for private universities. As a participant, Professor Rahman, said, "The sketchy type Private University Act was enacted in 1992 by the government to comply with private universities' owners. It seems they operated from a basis of that let's see what will happen". In response to strong criticism about private universities from different sections of the society, the government repealed the old Private University Act and enacted the new Private University Act 2010. However, the new law is being

criticised again due to significant limitations. The board of trustees is more empowered in the new Private University Act and the power elite have influenced the government to relax its regulations. As Professor Rahman again said, "...but we are so relaxed. We the University Grant Commission would not like to be so relaxed, but our parliamentary members perhaps are intending to establish a private university in near future ...they were not tightening the new act".

In 2006, a twenty-year 'Strategic Plan for Higher Education' (SPHE) was prepared by the University Grant Commission. The SPHE was a comprehensive written document in which neoliberal policy philosophy was incorporated into the higher education sector. The SPHE was prepared by Bangladeshi academics, but has been linked to the World Bank philosophy rather than with indigenous philosophy, or with the socioeconomic and political context. The power elite worked behind the scenes to ensure that neoliberal policy would be reflected. As Noman Sayed, a World Bank ex-portfolio and former Education Minister to the government of Bangladesh said:

...therefore I initiated measures to formulate a long term policy in the higher education sector. The Strategic Plan for Higher Education 2006 - 2026 was my brainchild ... At this point I contacted with the World Bank in my own capacity. The World Bank would not like to be involved in higher education except to offer technical expertise. I had some connections with them. I used my own ties and told them to prepare a strategic plan for me about the future direction of our higher education. I thought that if I could get some support from World Bank then I can prepare a long term plan. I told them to at least prepare a strategic study ... So it was sponsored by World Bank. We did a twenty-year strategic plan.

The power elite always advocate for IFIs and uphold their activities, although people have a sceptical attitude towards the World Bank activities in Bangladesh. As a participant, Professor Nurul, said, "People have always been sceptical about the World Bank involvement in development sectors. Whenever they give some money they try to make the policy and dictate it". However, the power elite are very positive about the IFIs

activities in Bangladesh. Often they argue for World Bank activities and convince the government to take loans and policy recommendations from IFIs. As Noman Sayed again said:

Can you tell me if the Bangladesh government does not provide money for higher education, then what will happen? Because of the World Bank, we did it. Can you tell me which sector has been destroyed by World Bank? We got an International Development Association loan from the World Bank with low interest. If we want to criticise we can criticise everywhere. It's your choice whether you take the World Bank's loan or not. Nobody forces you. Why you did not exercise your choice? Why did you not tell them that you are not interested to take their money? A lot of sectors have been reorganised by World Bank recommendations ...the World Bank never forces you to take a loan from them.

In order to incorporate a neoliberal policy agenda into the academic world, academic think tanks, bureaucrats and major political parties are working together; they reach consensus because of their class interest. The World Bank activities in the higher education sector became increasingly visible when the government took a loan from the World Bank under the terms of the 'Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project' (HEQEP) in 2009. The idea of HEQEP is not new in developing countries in terms of its vision and mission. However, the World Bank carried out significant reforms in the higher education sector. "The same project is implementing in various countries, such as Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, and Latin America. Rather we start it later compared to others, even compared to this region. Meanwhile Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Vietnam, Philippine, Thailand and Nepal start its third phase", said Professor Rahman.

The HEQEP is largely connected with the western educational model. Richardo Reich, consultant of the World Bank and the project coordinator of the *Tertiary Education for the Knowledge Society*, Ministry of Education, Chile, visited many universities in Bangladesh several times to provide training in how to implement the project. As Professor Rahman said, "Richardo Reich is a consultant of the World Bank providing

support to develop the academic innovation fund (AIF). Reich provided us training in how to implement this project". In order to develop the HEQEP, the World Bank took several initiatives for consulting with the power elite in Bangladesh. The motivation for such consultation was to convince the power elite. Professor Rahman again said, "At the top level, the government negotiated the projects with the World Bank. Maybe we should have declined the loan from them, but the reality is we need money. ...the government was not eager to provide money in this sector". On December 4, 2008 the power elite were invited to attend a two-hour multi-country teleconference discussion about the competitive fund for higher education, connecting the World Bank headquarters with South Asian countries. In the discussion they shared what had been learnt by each nation in facilitating the implementation of higher education projects. In a keynote presentation Reich provided the specific lesson learnt in the Chilean context and how those experiences could be adopted in other countries. From the Bangladesh side, the VC of a private university, a UGC member, and current and former bureaucrats participated in the discussion through video conference (World Bank, 2008).

5.2.3 Higher education: is depoliticisation an agenda?

In the name of higher education reform, a pro-capital and pro-bourgeois higher education system has been introduced by the prescription of IFIs in order to develop apolitical student attitudes. As a participant, Professor Ahkam, asserted, "With the support of the World Bank we have developed a depoliticised, pro-capital and pro-bourgeois education system ... It does not address the burning crisis of the educational system, nor problems of the students and teachers". The pro-capital and pro-bourgeois higher education system has transmitted a corporate ideology to its graduates. An education system based on market and corporate ideology offers no opportunity for students to develop critical thinking about the existing capitalist system in Bangladesh (Giroux, 2005). The readiness of students to think critically has been diminished by

introducing the pro-capital education system; students have lost their self-esteem and self-reliance. As another participant, Professor Nur, said:

The higher education system is not creating a critical mindset in students. It does not create a sense of liberty and freedom, or students' sense of self and society. How these things can be developed in the graduate's mind is not addressed by our higher education system. Some graduates may develop a critical attitude of mind with their own initiative and with the support of the individual teacher. Pedagogy as such is totally absent in our higher education. A teacher who interacts with the students does not take the initiative to explore the horizons of the students. There is nothing in our curriculum or universities' documents that says that students will develop their critical and scientific thinking after getting this education.

Some participants believed that the superficial and westernised market-driven ideology has produced no alternatives for students. The students believe in the capitalist system and it is strongly believed that no other ideology in society can defeat the capitalist structure. Within the neoliberal hegemony, politics have also been transmitted into the market-driven ideology and thus democratic values are subordinated by it (Giroux, 2002). This process does not contribute to true transformation of students' lives. It suppresses the class conflict in the society and polarises a two-party political system which is considered to serve the interest of global capital. As another participant, sociologist Professor Sharma, said:

A two-party political system has arisen that suppresses the class conflict. There is no difference between the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and Awami League; they are two bourgeois parties of the same coin. Capitalist liberal democracy creates a two-party system. Without a two-party system capitalism can flourish, but a two party-system can help to run the capitalist system easily.

On the other hand, student politics in the higher education institutions are portrayed intentionally as a nasty thing, and it is believed that student politics have destroyed students' creativity and ability, and thus students need to keep away from politics. Many faculty members in the universities have started to believe that student organisations cannot bring any true change in the current situation. As a participant, Professor Itfad, said, "Why do we have different political students' organisations? ...you cannot find such students' organisations anywhere in the world ... We needed them during the Pakistan regime to get independence. But we don't need them in an independent country".

The apolitical project in higher education institutions has been evident since the 1990s when democratic values were restored in Bangladesh by mass uprising against the autocratic regime. In the last twenty years a succession of democratic governments have ruled the country, but they could not bring any true change into student politics, rather they have tried to use student forces for their political interest. Student politics have been stigmatised through a blaming game played by major political parties and therefore students' rights have been increasingly diminished. Rather the democratic practice of the students in higher education institutions has been destroyed; no student body election in any public university has been held during the last twenty years. As a participant, Abir, said, "The student association in public universities does not work in the last twenty years. The university authority intentionally makes the student body dysfunctional, with the support of the government. If a student body could work, students could raise their voice". This process ensures two things in the universities: it encourages undemocratic practice by the ruling student organisation, and it portrays student politics as bad. Therefore most students keep away from student politics. Many departments of the universities strictly adhere to a non-political attitude and demand a politics-free campus, resulting in the creation of apolitical attitudes in students. A student, Rohini, said:

No student in our department can get involved in student politics. Our chairman is so strict ... I don't have any idea about national politics. Everyone says that

politics is nasty, so I am out of politics. What I understand about politics is nasty ... I prefer a politics-free campus. Those who are involved in politics cannot continue their education; politics hampers their educational life.

Some participants believed that the apolitical project in the higher education sector has been developed in order to foster higher education in the private sector. Often students' politics are blamed for the deterioration of the quality of education in the public university. It is a fairly well established belief in society that the public university is a hub of nasty student politics where there is no space for a true development of knowledge. It is believed that both students and teachers are involved in politics and divided into various groups, and that they have only a rare connection with the task of seeking knowledge. It is believed rather that they involve themselves in non-academic events. In the same way, media campaigns portray public universities as non-academic places. The motive of the campaign is to glorify the private universities. As a participant, Professor Oyasim, said:

...still public universities are unparalleled to conduct research and postgraduates degrees. But if you look at the media you will find nothing good from public universities. As a chairman or an ordinary teacher I have attended at least a hundred seminars and symposium in the last year, but none of them are covered by the media. However a lot of negative reports of public universities, for example a dispute between two students are published by the media. Since they are related to the business houses, the media never wants to focus on good things in the public universities. Whatever events happen in the private universities are covered by the media with a big caption. Therefore the public image of public universities is negative: they think that public universities are places for conflict between two groups of students rather than a place to study.

Fear about student politics in the public universities is an attitude that has developed in both middle and upper classes and thus potential students look for alternatives. Some participants stated that the upper class in Bangladesh is privileged to take advantages

from politics, but they always keep their children away from politics. They intend to ensure their children have a bright future. The private universities have capitalised on their apolitical image and have campaigned about themselves as politics-free campuses. As a participant, Professor Sharma, stated, "Parents are scared about our main bourgeois politics and therefore parents think that if they can send their children to a private university, children will be safe from nasty politics". Through their apolitical image and market oriented subjects, the private universities attract middle class people, and as a result private universities are increasingly flourishing in Bangladesh in the last twenty years. Professor Sharma said again:

The notion of an apolitical image is being used by the private universities. This is a capital of North South and BRAC or other private universities. They capitalise on parents' fear of students' politics in public universities and urge parents to send their children to their institutions as they portray themselves as apolitical.

An apolitical attitude on the part of graduates helps to "produce skilled labourers who are symbolically blind, disarmed, and brainless", said a student leader, Hasan. They are treated as instruments for serving global capitalism, but have no critical insight into capitalist oppression, injustice, and the class structure of the society. The overall political culture of the society is gradually transformed into depoliticisation and the term democracy is becoming a synonym for market ideology (Giroux, 2005).

5.3 Neoliberalism and Knowledge-based Economy

5.3.1 Higher education: merely a means for producing highly skilled labour

Universities in Bangladesh, though often traditionally seen as crucial sponsors of knowledge in society (Bourdieu, 1984; Ritzer, 2000 cited in Dzisha, 2010), are hampered in this role within the postmodern capitalist mode of production. Rather they are advised to produce highly skilled, trained, motivated and ethically committed individuals who can meet the country's future demands (University Grant Commission, 2006). Ironically, the country's future demand depends on the demand of the global

capital market because universities are only expected to supply skilled manpower for the global market. These assumptions influence academics, particularly business and technology related academics as Professor Nilima, a teacher of technology related subjects, said:

It is fine that we need to practice basic knowledge, but I don't think that if some departments such as Urdu, Persian, Pali and Sanskrit will shut down it will not hamper the country's development. But if others like our department or microbiology, biotechnology shut down it will hamper the country's development.

Often it is argued in the SPHE that "Bangladesh's capacity to compete regionally and globally in the areas of science and technology, medicine and engineering, trade and commerce, communication, and ICT will be severely restricted by the shortage of skilled manpower with disastrous consequences for the country" (University Grant Commission, 2006, p. 3). A symbiotic relationship is developed between local and global capital through higher education. In the emphasis on building a society founded on a knowledge-based economy, market-driven subjects are gaining prominence, as part of a global change in the field of science and technology. Therefore these subjects are also given priority in universities' future planning, whereas pure sciences, humanities, arts, and even social science related subjects are ignored entirely due to little linkage to the job market.

Profit maximisation, the prime goal of global capital, can be increased by increasing productivity which largely depends on increasing labour manpower. As Professor Ahkam said, "If labourers are more skilled they will produce more goods for the capitalists". Therefore "higher education is not a quest of knowledge but a skill ...institutions provide a minimum level of education to ensure students' skill ...the definition of science is changed because the mode of production is changed today for global capitalism", said Professor Ahkam again.

Both universities and students in Bangladesh are increasingly becoming part of the entrepreneurs. Most of the universities are intending to meet the demand of the markets, as Professor Nur said, "If you look at the private universities most of them offer degrees in MBA, BBA, and computer science ... Those who are studying in computer science mostly are ultimately directed towards business ...public universities are also turned into it". The demands of the market also determine students' future destinations. Market related subjects are in high demand by students as a means to get a good job. Students are keen to work with multinational corporations (MNCs). As a participant, Rohini, student of a public university, said, "I wished to be an executive of a MNC during my school life ...still I am dreaming of it". In terms of neoliberal hegemonic discourse, higher education in Bangladesh is serving global capital. Graduates are produced for MNCs and the developed world rather than for national interests. Significant numbers of students are going abroad, although developed countries make no contribution to produce so-called skilled graduates. As Professor Nur said:

We are producing skilled labour through our higher education for the western world. Who are the highly skilled migrants? We produce highly skilled migrants. Therefore our curriculum does not incorporate our societal norms and values, rather it incorporates western views. In this era of globalisation we produce graduates not for us, but for others. So we invest money for our graduates to become highly skilled migrants for western countries. They are getting a product through higher education which is compatible with their economy without any investment.

Since the 1980, the readymade garment (RMG) sector, along with other private industrial sectors, has been rapidly flourishing through the promotion of the SAP. As the RMG industries are labour-intensive and Bangladesh has availability of labour, various international and national entrepreneurs have established RMG industries in Bangladesh (Halim & Kabir, 2006). The SAP also helps to establish assembly line industries by the MNCs. RMG, assembly line industries, and other private industries, for

example insurance and banking sectors require skilled labour. Therefore business related subjects became high in demand in the mid-eighties with the expansion of these private industries. Various public universities, particularly the IBA and the faculty of business at the University of Dhaka, introduced market related degrees in response to the expansion of private industries. As a participant, Professor Oyasim, said:

The centre (developed countries) was looking for cheap labour in the peripheries. Various assembly line industries and garment industry have been established in Bangladesh due to the availability of cheap labour in 1980s. This transformation required a new type of skilled labour that has an impact on higher education.

Some participants stated that the Bangladesh economy was connected to global capital because of colonial relationships. So, national capital is becoming merged with international capital by introducing SAP. As Professor Oyasim again said, "...rather it was increasingly connected with global capitalism as part of the colonial relationship. Higher education is diverted to generate half-skilled or technical manpower which can serve global capitalism, but fails to produce generalised knowledge for serving our own people".

Another participant, Professor Rahman, said, "From the first day private universities have been started with technical and business related subjects. They think that other subjects cannot attract students". In line with global trends, private universities are much more linked with business and technology related subjects since these subjects attract students. The private universities take up the global trend and supply skilled labour to the MNCs and the developed world. As another participant, Abdul Hye, owner of a private university, said:

Students who have a degree in business administration are getting jobs in various corporate offices ... If we offer a degree in philosophy then how will we prepare students for the job market. I feel that a university should have some follow up responsibilities to the students. Like parents, private universities are

relatively more concerned than public universities and that is why we produce manpower in a link with the market. We are successful ...we are producing quality manpower ... I am targeting not only the Bangladesh market, but also the global market. Our students are getting jobs in various countries e.g. Korea, Middle East along with MNCs. They are competing globally now.

Some participants stated that the global capitalist system has required new institutions, a new governing system, and new economic and political systems. Therefore the postmodern capitalist system has demanded people who could serve the system. However, some participants in this study said that such a higher education system neither produces basic knowledge nor develops critical human beings. Rather it helps to promote a brain drain. As Professor Guho, an activist of *Shiksha Andolon Mancha* [Platform of Education Movement], said, "Indirectly private universities and to some extent public universities are promoting a brain drain, as they are producing skilled manpower for the global market and often these students are going abroad". Due to lack of adequate research across a broad range of subjects, universities in Bangladesh are not able to generate new knowledge in those subjects. "How come a student is getting a degree in computer science and information technology without having a mathematical background? Students who are getting degrees in these subjects do not study theoretical concepts. They are doing assembling", said Professor Guho again. Subjects that were traditionally seen as fundamental, such as sociology, physics, chemistry, are persistently ignored by both public and private universities. This trend helps to develop patron-client relationships between the developed world and Bangladesh. As Professor Guho again said, "Software is created by the western students ... Our students are carrying out their orders. Basic knowledge is generated and reserved by the western who are dictating to us. We have lost our originality because of the market-driven forces".

5.3.2 Academic freedom in the higher education sector: a far cry

The crisis of academic freedom in the universities in Bangladesh is revealed by two broader factors: intervention by state and market in universities. Both public and private universities operate under separate laws. Each public university has a separate law; however, private universities operate under a Private University Act. Public universities, except for four, are directly controlled by the state, which will, for example, appoint top officials, such as the vice chancellor (VC), the pro-vice chancellor and the treasurer, of the university.

In 1973 in order to ensure academic and intellectual freedom the government of the time promulgated separate laws, often known as the '73 ordinances⁸ (Ministry of Education, 1995), for four public universities. However, government interventions in these universities have been more visible due to some limitations of the ordinances. Therefore there was an expectation that initiatives would be taken to overcome the limitations and to ensure academic freedom and university autonomy. Instead the government proposed to introduce a new act, the Umbrella Act⁹, for governing the public universities (Kabir, 2010). According to the '73 ordinances four public universities were to be administered by different bodies, such as senate, syndicate, academic

⁸ After getting independence in 1971, the then government promulgated the University Ordinances for four public universities in 1973, known as the '73 ordinances, in order to ensure autonomy and academic freedom of the public universities.

⁹ Because of lack of cohesion in the public universities the University Grant Commission proposed the Umbrella Act in order to operate the public universities within one legal framework. The proposed Umbrella Act recommended two ways for appointing high officials of public universities in order to overcome political intervention. First, the governing body of each university has the authority to select and appoint the VC which would require new legislation. Second, the Chancellor would form a national search committee with adequate legal backing in order to recommend the appointment of a VC, which would replace the current system of electing or appointing VC largely based on political loyalty. It recommended that a retired Supreme Court Judge/VC may head the search committee along with other members and they should forward a panel of three prospective candidates, highlighting their justification of nomination to the Chancellor. Alternatively, they should forward a panel of five prospective candidates with an adequate justification of their nomination to the respective university Senate, of which the Senate can shortlist three candidates and forward it to the Chancellor for appointing one as VC (see 'Strategic Plan for Higher Education 2006-2026', 2006; Kabir, 2010 for details).

council, rather than by direct control of the government. According to several public universities acts, the President of the country is the Chancellor of the most of the universities; the Prime Minister is the Chancellor of several public universities. The Chancellor nominates a significant number of senate and syndicate members for the universities. Apart from that, the speaker of the national parliament, the UGC and the Ministry of Education, which are also parts of the government, also nominate senate and syndicate members for the universities (Ministry of Education, 1995). As the President and the Prime Minister are elected by the ruling party, the ruling party thus influences the President and the Prime Minister in the appointment of top officials of the public universities, and nominates its choice of appointees to the senate and the syndicate. Since the senate and the syndicate are the decision-making bodies of the public universities, the government can easily intervene in the public universities through their representatives in the different bodies.

Nevertheless, the democratic governments, like the military governments, have violated the various university acts several times in order to appoint to the top posts for the four public universities¹⁰. By applying the British Black Act of 1897, the top posts of the four public universities have been changed by the elected democratic government since the 1990s. This process has ensured the ruling party and the government have control over the public universities. In most cases the government nominated people, such as the VC, the pro-VC, and the treasurer, who maintained good relations and had an ideological connection with the ruling party. This tendency helped to make two recent major changes in the four public universities I have discussed. Firstly, teachers in

¹⁰ According to the '73 university ordinance "the vice-chancellor shall be appointed by the Chancellor for a period of four years from a panel of three persons to be nominated by the Senate" (Ministry of Education, 1973, p. 6). The senate is comprised of the VC, pro-VC, treasurer, government officials nominated by the government, speaker's representatives from the parliament, Chancellor's representatives from educationists, syndicate's representative, academic council's representative, affiliated and constituent colleges' representatives, registered graduate's representatives from the alumnus, university faculties from the teachers, and student central union representatives from the current students (see the Dhaka University Order 1973, Ministry of Education, 1973 for details).

affiliation with the ruling party are separated into various groups and subgroups, and are involved in lobbying with the ruling party for getting appointments to the highest posts of the university. Therefore those who have been appointed to the highest posts in the public universities carry out the government's desires, for instance, often teachers and staff are recruited based on the political ideology rather than academic background (University Grant Commission, 2006; University Grant Commission, 2009). Such process hampers the practice of academic freedom in the public universities. Often teachers who are affiliated in a specific political ideology are not able to criticise or take a stand against their party's stand. Secondly, the attitude of university administrators becomes increasingly autocratic after they become VC or pro-VC through violation of the university ordinance. They develop responsibilities to the government or the ruling party rather than to the teacher or student communities as the government appointed them by overlooking the ordinance. Often they are not quite happy if faculty members are involved in critique of the government's policies and university activities. A faculty member of Jahangirnagar University wrote a popular article in a national newspaper on April 3, 2011, in which he tried to reveal the present VC's undemocratic attitude and to critique the nature of corruption in the public universities. The next day the Jahangirnagar University's authority issued a letter to him and asked him to reply within seven days, explaining why the university authority should not take action against him according to the ordinance (Prothom Alo 2011b; Bangladesh Protidin 2011; Amardesh 2011). Such an attitude on the part of the public university's administration hampers the academic freedom of the public university. Faculty members are increasingly losing their critical insight because of violations of the university act by successive governments.

A participant, Professor Azim, a VC of a private university, said, "The vice chancellor has no power and freedom since she/he is controlled by the board of trustees. She/he has no right to use finance without permission by the board of trustees". The Private University Act ensures the owner's autocracy in the private universities. The top officials of a private university will be appointed by the Chancellor from a proposal made by the

board of trustees (Ministry of Education, 2010) and thus the entire administration of a private university is bound to implement the decisions of the board of trustees. The VC becomes the main academic administrator of a private university who will be responsible to the board of trustees and syndicate for his/her tasks. The Chancellor can dismiss top officials of the private university by the specific proposal of the board of trustees. The board of trustees is the sole agent for the financial matters of the private university. The board of trustees rather emphasises doing business and thus academic freedom gets less priority. As another participant, Professor Rahman said, "They [board of trustees] don't like academic freedom but business freedom". Therefore a private university becomes an institution in which owners' likes and dislikes get the main priority and academic freedom gets squeezed.

Another participant, Professor Sharma, sociologist of a private university observed, "Academic freedom is very much necessary in the university, but private universities do not like to nurture it". Often the board of trustees of the private university is accused of interfering in the academic freedom of the faculty. The faculty members of private universities stated that they were sometimes bound to glorify their chairman of the board of trustees. The junior faculty members and sometimes senior ones, particularly those without excellent academic records, do not like to talk about their academic freedom in the private universities. "No one has intervened with me yet, but I know how much private universities intervene in academic freedom... what a teacher should talk about in the classroom is directed by the university's top authority", said Professor Sharma again. The university's plans and development have become part of the students' taught content. As Professor Sharma stated, "During their second semester students have to become familiar with micro finance and BRAC activities. The chairman of the board of trustees and micro finance are glorified by the teachers in the classroom".

Due to lack of democratic governance in the private university, faculty members are often scared to practice their academic freedom. Private universities are alleged to fire

uncooperative staff. Often the academic decision is made by the board of trustees. As another participant, Noman Sayed, said:

They [private universities] have a board of trustees and everything in the university is subjugated under the board of trustees. The vice chancellor will be acting under the instruction of the board of trustees. Firing, hiring, student intake- all objections I have about the private universities ... The academic side should be worked independently without the influence of the board of trustees.

The influence of the board of trustees promotes faculty members to take illicit advantages from authorities in private universities. Such autocratic practice helps to uphold nepotism rather than academic practice. In this situation junior faculty members feel more vulnerable. As Kaniz, a junior faculty member of a private university, said, "If a young teacher does not have an excellent academic background, such as enough publications and brilliant results, but wants to survive and wants to do something good in the private university, she/he needs to compromise with authority".

It is dangerous on the part of higher education to generate market-based knowledge that hampers the academic freedom of the faculties. Basic knowledge is not generated through higher education in Bangladesh. Social knowledge, ideology, and the future structure of the society are reconstructed according to market based subjects. As a participant, Professor Nur said, "While education is becoming market-oriented three things are happening in society: education is becoming expensive, market-oriented subjects are getting priority, and universalities are generating market-oriented knowledge".

Some participants said that the fundamental productions of knowledge or technological innovations are not getting priority in the current higher education system. That is why basic research or basic subjects, for example physics, chemistry, and mathematics are getting less importance. Often faculties are not interested in introducing courses with critical aspects. Rather market-oriented courses are getting priority in the departments.

As a participant from a public university, Professor Nur, again said, "Our Economics Department has an emphasis on mathematical economics over a long period in a relationship with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), rather than on political economy".

Universities are encouraged to develop links with the industrial sectors. In the current fiscal year 2010-11, the government introduced the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) and under this scheme industrial houses will have a chance to be involved in the higher education sector. Meanwhile, various market-oriented departments have contracted the industrial sector to develop their laboratories. The link between the industrial sectors and the market-oriented subject helps a faculty to become the 'academic entrepreneur' (Giroux, 2002). As a participant from a public university, Professor Nilima, said:

Some companies wanted to establish a laboratory rather than build a floor. I know that if I request them at least eight out of ten companies will provide support to establish a laboratory, but where are the spaces to set up a lab? ... Students don't know that such type of research cannot be conducted through government funding anywhere in the world. The big researches in the world are conducted through private funding ... Research of applied science means involvement of the industries since it is expensive. This research is for them [industrial sector]. We generate manpower for them.

The corporate houses not only provide money for research and for teaching that generates business-related knowledge, they also provide money for reconstructing the buildings. As a participant, Abir, student activist, said, "An open stage is being constructed in Shahjalal University of Science and Technology with the financial support of *Surma* Cement Company". By providing money they want to strengthen the relationships between the universities and corporate houses. "We asked to name the open stage as Shah Abdul Karim, after a famous artist in Bengali literature. But the university authority proposed the open stage name as *Surma* Cement Company ...they got money from this company", said Abir again. Similarly, universities' relationships with

the corporate houses squeeze out the critical education and civic responsibility of the university (Giroux, 2002). At the same time corporate houses are branding their name in the public sphere by providing money for the universities.

5.3.3 Higher education, subject reification and consumerism

Some participants reported their perception that the hegemony of neoliberal policy in the higher education sector perpetuates wrong assumptions in society. Society pursues market fundamentalism, and market related subjects are treated as a key for the survival of students and their parents in society. Therefore students are persuaded to complete a degree in market related subjects. In the last decades the number of graduates in market related subjects has increased (University Grant Commission, 2010b), and thus both public and private universities have increased their admission capacity in these areas. However, the job market is saturated; the unemployment rate is increasing, regardless of whether the students have a degree in the market related subjects. As a sociologist, Professor Ahkam stated, "Students think that BBA and MBA are good for them for getting a job. But nearly about 80% of BBA and MBA graduates are unemployed". Often non-market related graduates are working beyond their areas. "A lot of students from physics and computer science are working in the Banking sector", said Professor Ahkam again. "BBA and MBA have been chosen as the top subjects followed by engineering, and medicine. Students think that if they study for a BBA or MBA they will get the job, but they do not get the proper job after completing", Professor Ahkam continued. The students are reified through the notion of market fundamentalism.

As a result of exclusive promotion of a limited range of subjects, students sometimes are destroying their academic life. In the public university qualified students are required to compete in the admission test. As the market-oriented subjects are in high demand a lot of students fail to compete in these subjects on their first try. As a result a lot of students try to compete in these subjects for second time. As a participant, Rohini, student of public university, said, "In my first try I got a chance at the Institute of

Education of Research for B.Ed. degree, but I wanted to study for a BBA. ...One year later I again tried to get admission into the BBA and got a chance". Market motivation is working behind this. Often the family is convinced by market fundamentalism and persuades the child to enrol in market related subjects. As Rohini said, "My family thought that a BBA degree would help me to get a job in a corporate line quickly. They thought that if I got a degree in education I would be a high school teacher at best".

A participant, Tomal, said, "I was completing three semesters in computer science and engineering in the American International University of Bangladesh (AIUB), but it did not match with my mentality. I could not cope with this subject... my CGPA was decreased day by day". Often families ignore their child's academic ability, not considering whether the child is able to continue their education or not. Moreover, there are families who do not like to consider their children's likes and dislikes. "After Higher School Certificate I tried to get admission into non-science related subjects, but I took admission into computer engineering due to family pressure. They think that beyond medical, engineering, and MBA, other degrees have no value in the job markets", Tomal continued. Sometimes students who are studying in non-market related subjects have experienced negative feedback from their family and society. "I experienced bad talk as I changed my area and began doing undergraduate in mass communication. They tell me, 'What will you do with this degree? This subject has no value and will not get any job but a journalist'", said Tomal. In fact, the family is worried about their children's futures. Often they think that if their children are not educated in a market related subject they will not compete in the job markets.

The participants stated that such privatised and market ideology helps to expand a consumerist attitude on the part of students. Students are moulded in their attitudes about higher education by the media. As a participant, Rohini, said "I am inspired by watching an entrepreneur's life in the TV. I watched a Hindi serial in TV where the main character was about the corporate life. The entrepreneur in the serial leads the whole company. That fascinated me". The culture of consumerism dominates students' critical

insight. Students are inspired by media. Some participants observed that students like to watch TV and use computers rather than to read books. As another participant, Professor Nurul, said, "We had a culture to read any types of books, but the current generation don't ...They are ambitious; they want to go outside and even abroad, to Europe, USA. They want to see themselves as an established person". The media-saturated society leads the young generation to see themselves in terms of the "aesthetic pleasures of consumerism and the dictates of commercialism rather than through a notion of publicness based on ethical norms and democratic values" (Giroux, 2002, p. 425).

The way respect is gained in society is often shaped by the extent of consumerism. As a participant, Hasan, a student of a private university, said, "I can tell people that I am an engineer and it has social status ...if I can earn money, society gives me value ... In the initial stage an engineer gets a salary of tk. 30,000 for a banking job. It sounds good". Society defines the established person in terms of the living standard, income, and how much they consume within a capitalist society. "You will get respect in Bangladesh and even everywhere in the world if you can earn money. Education is important, but money is also important", said Hasan again. The trend of subject reification also promotes the consumerist attitude of the students. The students want to believe that market related subjects ensure a good job with a handsome salary which can maintain a good standard of life in a consumerist society. "Truly after completing my degree in engineering I will do MBA degree ... Both business and engineering knowledge will be used in my future career ... It will give me huge scope ...I will earn more money and get more value", said Hasan again. In neoliberal society corporate culture is treated as the model for the perfect life and for individual success (Giroux, 2002).

Some participants stated that the culture of consumerism leads students to subjugate their conscience to capitalist society. "Our generation does not like to think deeply ...they need money and a car. They want to get a degree for getting a job to survive.

What they study in this semester they will forget in the next semester." said Hasan. Societal values and norms are replaced by market values. As Hasan said again, "When students get together they don't like to discuss their study, rather they talk about the latest brand model of car or fancy mobile set". Corporate culture portrays citizenship within privatised cultural affairs in which individuals develop self-interest and material gains (Giroux, 2002). In the name of global citizenship through higher education the young generation is growing up without commitment toward society. As Kaniz, a junior faculty member, experienced, "Throughout the time I think students are being self-centred and extremely selfish. They don't think about how to develop the country rather they love themselves ... They want to have a credit from volunteer organisations to develop their curriculum vitae". Society tends to interpret the good life in terms of how much an individual consumes in the market and of which corporate brands he buys (Giroux, 2002). Students are succumbing to market values and ideologies in which their critical insight is being shrunk continuously.

5.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have aligned the experiences and understandings reported by participants in my study to the themes that I identified from my earlier review of the literature and of the history of Bangladesh. Two major areas that relate to the neoliberal policy agenda were explored. I reported participants' views, using direct quotes, in order to examine in detail the complex nature of the neoliberal policy agenda in the higher education sector in Bangladesh. I have also drawn on media reports and on the critical literature.

In the next chapter I explore the consequences of neoliberalism in the higher education sector in Bangladesh.

Chapter Six: Neoliberal Policy Shift toward Higher Education: The Consequences

6.1 Introduction:

This chapter is structured into two subsections: neoliberalism in the higher education sector and its structural consequences, and neoliberalism and resistance. In the first subsection, I explore the structural consequences of neoliberalism in the higher education sector. I use the illustrative example of three institutions to examine the trend of marketisation in higher education. In the final subsection I concentrate on resistance to the neoliberal policy in the higher education sector. This subsection also provides a critical perspective of resistance to neoliberalism and of how neoliberal policy hinders access to higher education.

6.2 Neoliberalism in the Higher Education Sector: The Structural Consequences

In this subsection I examine three institutions as illustrative case studies. Using relevant documents and interviews with stakeholders I examine the structural consequences of the neoliberal policy agenda on the higher education sector. These three cases depict the current trend in the sector. In the first case study I address how the public universities are transformed into the private university model. By explaining various public universities acts, which were established in 2005 and in 2006, I argue that the neoliberal policy agenda encourages the government to set up public universities following the private university model. The second case study describes how rapid marketisation of higher education has been geared up throughout the private sector. Private universities are identified by businessmen as one of the best sectors in which to invest money, as capital accumulation is straightforward. In the third case study I focus on the strategies that are being adopted by the public universities to reduce their financial crisis, in relation to the neoliberal policy agenda.

Case 1: A new neoliberal model of the public university in Bangladesh

Since 2005 seven public universities have been established by the government. Of these, four are general universities and the other three are specialised universities, such as for agriculture and veterinary studies. The general universities offer degrees on general subjects, for instance Bengali, English, history, philosophy, Islamic history and culture, Islamic studies, economics, sociology, political science, social work, physics, mathematics, chemistry, statistics, geography and environment, botany, zoology, psychology, along with the business and technology related subjects. However, the difference between a general and a specialised university is not only in producing different knowledge, but also in administrative and financial aspects. Although, both general and specialised universities are expected to find strategies for mitigating their expenditures, the basic difference is that after an initial establishment period there is no further financial support from the government for the general universities. Through different government grants to specialised and general universities, the state not only promotes market related subjects, but also forces general public universities into a private model. The new models of public general universities have been established under the direct control of the government.

The government promulgated the Jagannath University¹¹ Act in 2005, in order to expand and improve teaching and research and to produce modern knowledge in line with global standards of higher education (Kabir, 2010). The President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh would be Chancellor of the University and had the power to appoint the top posts, for example the vice chancellor (VC) and treasurer. According to the act (section 1), they would be appointed for a period of four years and might be

¹¹ Jagannath University, established in 1858, is one of the most prestigious educational establishments in Bangladesh and has a history of about 150 years. It was the best equipped private college in Dhaka as early as 1910. In 1921, when the University of Dhaka was established, the college stopped admission to degree courses and was renamed as Jagannath Intermediate College. This status was changed after 28 years in 1949, when it reopened degree classes. The college was transformed into a public college in 1968 and later, after seven years it introduced honours and masters programmes. At that time the government once again took over the college and upgraded it into a postgraduate college.

continued depending on the satisfaction of the Chancellor (Ministry of Education, 2005). The treasurer can invest the university's assets with the permission of the syndicate and will be liable to prepare the university's annual budget based on the university's income. On the basis of global demands and the socioeconomic condition of the country the university can open new departments by the permission of University Grant Commission (ibid). The university can generate funds through five strategies: government grant, tuition and other fees of the students, earning money from other legal sources by the university, loans, and profit from investing university assets. The university can meet its entire financial demands from this fund. The university has the right to set tuition fees and other costs on the basis of its yearly expenses. At least 16% of the project cost of establishment of the university will be mitigated by the university's own resources. Government contribution will be reduced year by year and will be reduced to zero within five years of the university's establishment (ibid).

The other two general universities, the Comilla University and the Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University, were established in 2006. The government promulgated the Comilla University and the Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University Acts on May 8 and May 9, 2006 respectively. Both universities were established to expand modern teaching and research facilities at national level in line with global demands (Ministry of Education, 2006a and 2006b). The universities are entitled to introduce new streams of teaching and research degrees in science, arts, social sciences, law, and business studies with the permission of the University Grant Commission. The President and the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh are to be the Chancellor of the Comilla University and the Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University respectively, and have the power to appoint the top posts. They will be appointed for four years and will work at the direction of the Chancellor. If the Chancellor considers that the university does not work properly, the Chancellor can direct any order which everyone will be bound to carry out (Ministry of Education, 2006a and 2006b).

Both universities are recommended to adapt seven strategies, like the Jagannath University, to raise operational funds. The university will mitigate all financial expenses from this fund. The university can invest the university's fund by the permission of the syndicate to make a profit. The student tuition and other fees will be determined yearly, based on how much money is needed to operate the university. The government grant will be decreased gradually and no government grant will be allotted from ten years after the establishment of the universities (Ministry of Education 2006a and 2006b).

Case 2: Marketisation of higher education

A former education minister admitted that a private university opened in his district illegally, but he was unable to close it down because of pressure groups and weak legal frameworks. It is claimed that the government initiated the introduction of a new act several times, but failed due to pressure from the power elite. As Noman Sayed, former Education Minister, said, "Unfortunately I allowed pressure groups to stop the initiative. That is why we could not do more things in the higher education sector ... These are realities like pressure groups; these are big industrialists, businessmen who are investing in private universities". The private universities are mostly accused of marketisation of higher education. As Professor Rahman said:

I think business is good, but they are doing bad business, such as naked profit making. They established private universities anywhere, for example in residential areas, on the highway and on a very important person (VIP) road, and on the market ...they are selling the degrees ...the government formulated an inquiry committee in 2005 headed by the chairman of University Grant Commission to investigate complaints made against private universities. Later a one man judicial inquiry was formed headed by the High Court Judge, Justice Fazlul Haque. Under the inquiry committee private universities were categorised, such as good performing, fair performing, not bad performing, bad performing and very bad performing. Only eight private universities were found to be good performing. Five private universities were turned down due to financial

irregularities and providing bogus degrees. Three out of five continue their academic activities by getting a stay order from the High Court.

In this situation the government has enacted a new Private University Act 2010 instead of the Private University Act 1992, but the act is again accused of serving the owners' interest rather than truly changing higher education in the private sector. In order to establish and administer the private university a board of trustees will be formed with nine to twenty-one members. A proposed university would have its own or rental accommodation with 25,000 square feet. It would also have a reserve fund of tk. 50 million for Dhaka and Chittagong metropolitans, and tk. 30 million for other metropolitan areas and tk. 15 million for other areas. After getting provisional approval for seven years the university will be required to have one acre of land in Dhaka and Chittagong metropolitan areas and two acres in other areas, and permanent buildings. A private university can remain under provisional approval for another five years if they fail to meet the requirements. Within twelve years a private university will be required to fulfil the entire requirements. If any private university fails to fulfil the requirements, it will not get final approval to operate, but can still complete the degrees which already been offered (Ministry of Education, 2010).

In the previous law a private university was required to have five acres of land, but the current law has relaxed the requirement to one acre of land (Ministry of Education, 1992; Ministry of Education, 2010). "In the context of the current market the reserve fund should be at least tk. 200 million", said Professor Rahman. However, the reserve fund was decreased from tk. 50 million to tk. 15 million in the latest Private University Act. Nevertheless, the Association of Private Universities of Bangladesh (APUB) has demanded a repeal of the current Private University Act in order to ensure the autonomy and academic freedom of private universities.

During the tenures of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) (1991-1996 and 2001-2006), fifty private universities were given permission to start their academic programmes. In 2003, a total of sixteen private universities obtained permission. Four

private universities were added by the Awami League government (1996-2001). From 1992 to 2008, permission was given to fifty-six private universities, of which five were cancelled due to violations of the Private University Act. However, two of them are still conducting academic activities with the permission of the High Court (University Grant Commission, 2008). Currently another fifty-eight private universities have been applied for by the businessmen, NGOs, and politicians (Prothom Alo, 2011a). Of these thirty private universities after review of forty-two applications were recommended to the Ministry of Education by the University Grant Commission for approval. It is alleged that at least fifteen out of thirty proposed new private universities could not fulfill the requirements of the Private University Act 2010; yet they were still recommended (Prothom Alo, 2011c; Kaler Kantha, 2011).

According to the University Grant Commission, the private universities had a total of 8,718 students in 1998, but it increased to 35,968 (more than four-times greater) in 2001. In 2006 the combined enrollment of students reached 100,000 (cited in Aminuzzaman, n.d). The rates of students' enrollment were increased by 41%, 40%, 37%, 7%, and 10% in 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009 respectively. There was only a 3% increase of students from 2008 to 2009 since the illegal outer campus of the private universities was closed down by the government in 2008 (University Grant Commission, 2010b). A total of 200,939 (151,814 male and 49,152 female) students are studying in several disciplines in fifty-one private universities in 2009 (University Grant Commission, 2010b). Students in science, medical, agriculture, and engineering and technology related subjects increased to 29% in 2009 from 27% in 2008, whereas students in business increased to 49% in 2009 from 26% in 2008. Conversely, students in arts, social sciences, education, fine arts decreased to 13% in 2009 from 18% in 2008. Only 8% and less than 1% students were enrolled in law and economics departments respectively in 2009 (University Grant Commission, 2010b). In 2008, 29,448 students earned degrees from forty-seven private universities. In the Asian University of Bangladesh, for example, 4,350, students graduated (ibid).

Case 3: Evening courses: a new model of financing in public universities

A large number of public universities introduced evening courses in order to reduce their financial burden. The market-oriented subjects prioritised the setting up of evening courses. Nevertheless, most of the largest public universities, University of Dhaka, University of Rajshahi, University of Chittagong, Islamic University, and Jahangirnagar University, have already introduced evening courses in many market-oriented disciplines. Such courses were introduced primarily to generate additional income, rather than to provide access. Primarily the evening course aimed at helping executives of the business and non-business organisations to develop their professional careers. The students must bear the entire cost of administering the programmes.

The University of Dhaka, the largest premier university of the country, was established in 1921 with twelve departments under three faculties. It is also one of the biggest universities in Asia with approximately 33,112 students and 1,805 teachers. The university has sixty-six departments in thirteen faculties, eight institutes, twenty centres for advanced research, and seventeen residential halls in which one hall is for international students. Apart from the regular programmes, many departments and institutes are now offering evening courses. Currently eight institutes and fifteen departments are conducting such evening courses. Primarily the evening courses, often known as 'self-financed programmes', were introduced by the faculty of business studies in 2001. In keeping with this trend, other departments at the University of Dhaka also set up such evening programmes under various names. Some departments, for instance, the Bengali literature in 2004, journalism and mass communication in 2006, English literature in 2009, and computer science and engineering in 2010, failed to open evening courses due to massive student protests (New Age, 2005b; Prothom Alo, 2010a; Kaler Kantha, 2010a; Droho, 2010).

Similarly, the University of Rajshahi, the second largest university, also introduced evening courses in some departments, for example, in the department of law and justice. In the same way, the University of Chittagong and Islamic University introduced

evening courses. These universities offer degrees in executive MBA and diploma degrees. The executive MBA degree is also offered by the Bangladesh University of Professionals.

The significant observation is that the market is the determining factor for opening the evening courses. The institute of information technology at the University of Dhaka mentions in their website that they offer market oriented programmes based on information and communication technology (ICT). Similarly, the department of development studies has introduced different short courses and training programmes for professionals. The institute of statistical research and training also offers short training modules for researchers, practitioners, students and professionals.

6.3 Neoliberalism and Resistance

6.3.1 Neoliberal violence and the struggle for higher education

Since 1952 student resistance movements in public universities in Bangladesh have often been accompanied by campus violence. But such campus violence, with the support of the teachers, students and the political parties, helped to establish the people's rights. In 1952 campus violence erupted in order to establish Bengali as one of the state languages of what was then Pakistan. Later most cases of campus violence contributed to the nationalist movements and led to the downfall of autocrat rulers and their decisions. Examples include the Education Movement in 1962, the Six Points Movement in 1966, the mass upsurge in 1969, the Liberation War in 1971, the further mass upsurge in 1990, and the August movement against the military backed caretaker government in 2007. From the Pakistan regime to the Bangladesh regime, the power elite have always identified the student community as the main force to bring about any change in the country. Therefore the Pakistani rulers targeted the students of the University of Dhaka and attacked them in the name of 'Operation Searchlight' on March 25, 1971 (Siddique, 2011).

However, the campus violence which has been unfolding in universities recently has a different context. It is a common phenomenon in any university to have an explosion of campus violence due to the implementation of neoliberal policy in the university. Often it is argued that the violence is culturally shaped and has a specific context; however, it is clear that neoliberal practices promote the violence and authoritarianism (Giroux, 2004, cited in Springer 2009a). A new form of violence is being noticed in the universities which is neither related to a nationalist movement nor subjugated to opposite political parties. As Springer (2009a) suggests, neoliberalism may not bring peace but may rather to re-engrave violence. In 2010 significant numbers of violent incidents erupted in both public and private universities because of the incorporation of the neoliberal policy agenda, for example the hike in tuition fees, the introduction of the evening programme, and the imposition of value added tax (VAT) on tuition fees in private universities. The new form of neoliberal violence not only interrupted students' academic life, but also contributed to creating a chaotic environment in society. A good number of students were harassed by the events of the violence: often they were tortured and faced with criminal charges; many were suspended by university authorities.

From May to August 2010 major neoliberal violence unfolded in two public universities and many more private universities in Dhaka. Due to a decision to increase tuition fees at the University of Chittagong, the third largest public university, and to impose VAT on the tuition fees of private universities students, violence erupted the same time. The third instance of violence broke out in the University of Dhaka due to a decision to open evening courses.

The University of Chittagong: a volatile situation

A decision to increase tuition fees was proposed at the 298th meeting of the finance committee of the University of Chittagong and was endorsed by the university syndicate in their 459th meeting on May 22, 2010 (Budhbar, 2010). According to the syndicate decision the increased fees were made effective from July 1, 2010 (The Daily Star, 2010b). Since July 26 of the same year students have agitated, opposing increased

tuition fees, resulting in massive violence in the university campus on August 2. The student resistance was accompanied with violence and spread over the surrounding areas of the university, interrupting daily life. On August 1 agitating students vandalised at least thirty vehicles in the city centre in a call for the withdrawal of increased tuition fees, and police arrested twenty students (New Age, 2010a).

Violence erupted intensely and continued for the whole day when the police intercepted separate processions formed by several thousand angry students from various points of the university. The university authorities deployed twelve platoons of police, three platoons of armed battalions and one platoon of the rapid action battalion (RAB) (Kaler Kantha, 2010b). The law enforcers charged with batons and fired 311 rubber bullets and used 104 canisters of tear gas to disperse the agitating students, leaving seventy students injured, along with female students, law enforcers, teachers and journalists. The angry students started vandalising various faculty buildings including the registry building, information technology (IT) building, central library, post office, museum, telephone exchange, and at least twenty vehicles (Prothom Alo, 2010b; New Age, 2010b; Kaler Kantha, 2010b). The police also fired rubber bullets and tear gas inside the female dormitory, *Shamsunnahar* Hall, in which the agitating students took shelter from the police (The Daily Star, 2010b). The aggrieved students burned garbage and tyres on the road to block traffic. "Police torched us inhumanly in front of the *Shaheed Minar* [Martyr Monument]... One policeman holds and another beats us", said a female student (Kaler Kantha, 2010b). The neoliberal policy faces challenge when it tries to prevent protest resistances through a violent response (Springer, 2009b).

Law enforcers arrested at least 241 students in connection with violence and two more cases were filed by the police and the university authorities against 1,546 students (Kaler Kantha, 2010b; New Age, 2010c). Later police released 187 students and the remaining students appeared in court. Thirty-four of the students were granted bail by the court and six students were allowed by the court to take police remand for a day

(New Age, 2010d). The university authority, on the other hand, suspended for two years a student who was alleged to have assaulted the proctor during the violence.

Violence over neoliberalism contributed to shutting down the university for a long time which interrupted students' academic life. In an urgent syndicate meeting on that day the university authorities made a decision to close down the university till September 16, 2010 (Kaler Kantha, 2010b). Such a decision helped the authorities to divert the students' resistance. The university authorities were afraid of further strong student resistance as a result of police action leaving a good number of students injured and some sentenced to prison.

The Private Universities: sparking violence on the street

In the fiscal years 2010-11 the government imposed VAT on students' tuition fees at the private universities. Students of the private universities were largely unaware of the VAT on tuition fees. However, some students of the East West University came to know about it when they were charged extra money by the authority in their second semester in July 2010. As a participant, Tomal, a student in a private university, said, "East West University students have primarily noticed that they have to pay 4.5% VAT on their tuition fees ...after a week we got the same notice from our university to pay 4.5% VAT on our tuition fee". Students of private universities increasingly came to know about the VAT on tuition fees and it made them annoyed. "We don't want to pay VAT at all. We are the citizens of this country. But why does government hamper our study by imposing further pressure on us?", said a student (Kaler Kantha, 2010c). Tomal again said:

Whenever you want to buy something from the market you have to pay VAT. Like other commodities we are supposed to pay VAT for our education. Students did not take this easily. We are studying without government money, we are not getting support from the government, and furthermore we have to pay VAT for this - but why?

Since July 26 thousands of students of private universities gathered to sit-in on the streets and protest the decision of VAT on tuition fees. They blockaded the roads and engaged in sporadic clashes with the police and damaged at least twenty-five to thirty vehicles since the police charged them with batons, leaving twenty students injured (New Age, 2010e; Prothom Alo, 2010c). As Tomal, who actively participated in this resistance, said, "Police charged us with batons, we were scattered. We became angry and vandalised the vehicles ... Police arrested some agitating students on the spot, but released them at night". During the clash whole areas become like a battlefield and people were scared to leave the areas. Local entrepreneurs closed down their businesses and the movement of vehicles on the road came to halt, leading to a huge traffic jam.

The following day the students again took to the streets and demanded the withdrawal of the VAT on tuition fees and the imposition of exemplary punishment on those who had tortured them the previous day. Dhaka Metropolitan police announced a ban on any type of processions and protest rallies on the street, but the students blockaded the street and became involved in clashes with the police again. The armed forces charged with batons and fired at least fifty rounds of tears gas on the students. The agitated students threw bricks at the police and vandalised a number of vehicles again (New Age, 2010f).

The University of Dhaka: violence on the street

From May 22 to May 26, 2010, students of the computer science and technology department at the University of Dhaka started a protest rally when the department made a market-driven decision to open evening courses for professionals. The protest rally continued for five consecutive days and turned into violence. Aggrieved students locked the main gate of the department and interrupted the entry of faculty into the department (Prothom Alo, 2010a). As Professor Nilima said:

We wanted to create funds for the department. Where can we get the money? ...we thought that if we introduce evening courses that would help us ... We did not expect that our students could disgrace us ...we got hurt and humiliated ...I realised that social values have deteriorated.

The agitating students blockaded the road twice and hampered transport within the university and adjacent areas. About two hundred agitating students gathered on the street and staged a demonstration against the decision. The vehicular movement on the roads near to the university campus created a traffic jam in the area (The Daily Star, 2010c).

6.3.2 Popular resistance to the neoliberal policy agenda in the higher education sector

Although the neoliberal policy agenda has been incorporated into various sectors in Bangladesh since the 1980 (Nuruzzaman, 2004), no major challenges have been mounted to it. Resistance does not often occur, because people are unaware of their rights. Rather state mechanisms are used as a safeguard for the power elite, and political parties take a stand with them (Kabir, 2010). Lack of political consciousness on the part of the people and no strong alternative political forces help the power elite to bring about various anti-people policies in development sectors.

However, Progressive Students Alliance (PSA), an alliance of the left- leaning student organisations, some left-leaning political parties, and progressive civil society bodies are trying to organise popular resistance to the neoliberal policy agenda in Bangladesh (Kabir, 2010). Their voices are not strong enough to mobilise the masses entirely; however, they are politically committed to bring the issue to the masses. Based on Marxist political ideology they make substantive criticisms of various neoliberal policies in different sectors. They develop a great many strategies in order to attract the masses to become involved. In the higher education sectors various acts of resistance have been organised by them against the neoliberal policy agenda since the 1990s. I explore

three student organisations who are engaged in organising popular resistance to neoliberal policy in the higher education sector in Bangladesh.

The Socialist Students Front (SSF), Bangladesh Student Federation (BSF), and Bangladesh Student Union (BSU) believe in socialist ideology and are working under the same umbrella, PSA, in the higher education sector to achieve their goals. Often they collaborate in organising resistance to the neoliberal policy agenda. They have succeeded to some extent, but have different experiences with such resistance. Due to their resistance both public and private universities and the state mechanisms suspended some decisions. In the last year four major acts of resistance were organised by the PSA. They organised resistance on behalf of general students with different degrees of active participation.

On May 26, 2010, the department of computer science and engineering at the University of Dhaka withdrew their decision to introduce evening courses (Dainik Janakantha, 2010). As Professor Nilima said, "Our initiative was destroyed by the leftist student organisations. They pressurised us to cancel the decision in opening the evening course. They provoked our students ... Students Federation, Socialist Student Front and Student Union mainly led the movement". On June 15, 2010 the University of Rajshahi postponed the decision to introduce evening courses in all departments of the social science faculty due to students' resistances led by PSA (The Daily Star, 2010a). On July 28, 2010, after a wave of student protests, the government withdrew the decision to set a 4.5% VAT on tuition fees at the private universities (New Age, 2010f). Student politics in the private universities are prohibited; however, students led a protest rally against the government decision. Some leftist organisations backed this resistance. As Tomal, a student in a private university, said:

I am an activist of a student organisation, Bangladesh Student Union ... Our resistance has ended up successfully, but we decided that we should be organised because a lot of issues are left to settle down in the private

universities. Therefore we want to organise a strong resistance in the private universities since other demands are not fulfilled yet.

On September 18, 2010, the University of Chittagong authorities postponed their decision to increase tuition fees following the massive resistance led by the PSA. However, the PSA continue their drive resistance to reverse the suspension of one of their fellows, to drop cases filed against student leaders and general students and to achieve the release of the students arrested during the resistance (New Age, 2010g).

Socialist Student Front

The SSF belongs to a leftist party and has organised various challenges to neoliberal policy in the higher education sector. Based on the Marxist ideology SSF treats every action as part of a whole social and political movement. As Abir, leader of SSF, said:

We lead education and student resistance based on a class perspective ...we identify the discontent in the education system in Bangladesh and try to organise students' resistances based on this discontent. Our alternative education system is formulated based on universal, scientific, secular and democratic value ... We always try to shape a student resistance as a political movement.

As part of its resistance the SSF uses various strategies for mobilising students. Often it is difficult for them to organise students while student politics are banned in a significant number of universities. However, the SSF is willing to take risks to make the resistance successful. "We are not motivated for self interest; rather we are committed to greater student interests. If we will be suspended from the university we will not stop our resistance until students' rights are established in the universities", said Abir. They use different methods to create students' awareness about their rights. In order to prepare the demands the activists of SSF talk to the students in their classroom, and even at residences. As Abir said, "We go to classrooms, and students' residences to talk to them. We take notes from them and compile and finalise their views. Based on the demands that are prepared from students' opinion we organise student resistance in

various universities frequently". They follow various steps during the resistance. "Normally we follow different stages during a resistance, for examples signature campaigning, human chain, submit memorandum, class boycott, sit-in on the street, procession rally and student strike, and citizen gathering", said Abir.

The SSF has actively participated in various students' resistance in different public universities. As Abir said, "About 5,000 students of Chittagong University have participated in a successful resistance against the decision of a hike of tuition fees. Around 2,000 students of Rajshahi University have organised a student resistance against night courses". The SSF also led the resistance at the University of Dhaka against the evening course. As Abir continued, "We did the same at the University of Dhaka where students have prevented the decision to have evening courses at the department of computer science and engineering".

During the resistance the activists of SSF faced different types of harassments from the university authorities, from student organisations loyal to the ruling party, and from state mechanisms. Often they were tortured by the police and the pro-government student organisations. During the resistance at the University of Chittagong the assistant secretary of SSF university unit was suspended by the university authority for two years. As Abir said, "Our co-secretary of Chittagong University unit has been suspended for two years from the university because of his active involvement in the student movement". Apart from the suspension, the activists of SSF were harassed by the police. As Abir said, "The president of the University of Chittagong unit has faced five police cases for the same reasons".

Often student organisations and university authorities confront each other. The university authorities, on the one hand, works to implement their decisions and student organisations. On the other hand, they are keen to prevent the universities' decisions. The SSF alleges that often they were pressured by university authorities to stop the students' resistance. "At least seventeen to nineteen students at the computer science of technology department were failed in their practical examination as they actively

participated in the resistance, whereas they had no previous record of failure in any examination in their academic life", said Abir.

Bangladesh Student Federation

The BSF has a different view on student resistance in the universities. They are part of the resistance to neoliberal policy in the higher education sector. However, they are more concerned about the depoliticisation of students that is brought about by the ruling class in order to incorporate the neoliberal policy in the higher education sector. As Habib, a leader of BSF, said, "Depoliticisation of the students is motivated by the ruling class deliberately ". Different ruling student organisations control aspects of the public universities, such as students' dormitories and university admission (which sometimes they sell). As Habib stated, "Nowhere in any university's environment is good for practicing open and pure knowledge. Students are deprived and tortured by the ruling student organisation ... No democratic practices of students are in the university and therefore the protest power of students is declining gradually". Undemocratic practices by the different ruling student organisations lead general students to move far away from student politics.

The BSF is not entirely against the opening of evening courses in the public universities, but they are critical of the commercialisation of higher education through evening courses. As Habib said:

Often authority claims that they want to educate more students through a night shift ...it is ridiculous. They do not want to provide higher education free of cost. They always count whether it is cost effective or not. If you ask them to operate an evening shift without money, they don't agree. Therefore it indicates that providing higher education is not the main concern for them, rather it is to earn money.

The BSF emphasises quality in education rather than quantity. They argue that public universities are facing a lot of crises in terms of a lack of adequate materials and

resources and teachers, and therefore evening courses will create more burdens for them. "It is not possible to introduce a new shift. No public university has proper a library, classroom, laboratories and other facilities. Universities are forced to introduce an evening shift, but they need to improve facilities for current students", said Habib.

During their resistance, activists of the BSF have been suppressed by university authorities and by state mechanisms. As Habib said "Our leaders at the University of Chittagong unit are still facing non-bail cases. The university authority promised us to withdraw the cases, but still they do not".

Bangladesh Student Union

The BSU is one of the oldest student organisations, established in 1952 based on four principles: unity, education, peace and progress. The formation process of the BSU was different from other student organisations as Hasan, leader of the BSU, said, "We don't have any parent organisation: we are independent in terms of our political decisions and activities". The BSU intends to establish a scientific, equal, mass and uniform education system for all. They believe that the socialist system can resolve the recent problems in the educational life of students. Therefore they organise resistance in the higher education sector to establish a socialist society. As Hasan said:

We press demands where the philosophy of education will create the secular society. Based on the '72 constitution, education policy needs to be prepared in which students will believe in a secular, non-communal, democratic and socialist society. Higher education will not be treated as a commodity. Socialist ideology will be established through this higher education.

Various acts of student resistance have been led by the BSU since the 1952. In the last year the BSU actively engaged in student resistance in universities to prevent the commercialisation of higher education. As Hasan said, "The proposed tuition fees were increased by 25% to 125% at the University of Chittagong ...left leaning progressive forces led the resistance and we were part of this resistance". Hasan again said, "In the

social science faculty at Rajshahi University seven departments, for examples, mass communication, sociology tried to open a second shift commercially like a private university, but we led a resistance against it". During the resistance, activists of the BSU suffered repression by the university authorities and state mechanisms. "Students were tortured, faced police cases and arrested in these resistances ...265 students were arrested and sentenced in the prison including our Chittagong University unit president", said Hasan.

According to the BSU, marketisation of higher education is not a new phenomenon in Bangladesh, but the students have become aware of the marketisation process in recent times when they faced huge tuition fees in various forms. Therefore resistance was recently organised in both private and public universities by the students.

"Resistance is hidden but is latent in many students. They can explore it when they face extreme crisis ... If it is not an inherent characteristics why did the students of private universities go into the street, why were they chanting and protesting the government decision", said Hasan. With the experience of contemporary student resistance in the universities, the BSU realises that in the past the students of Bangladesh always used to turn to rebellion when they faced crisis. "Generally students of private universities come from rich families and didn't have practical knowledge of political action, and they did not have any direct relationship with student and political organisations", said Hasan again.

In most cases the university authorities were reluctant to discuss the matter with the student bodies. No university in Bangladesh has had student elected bodies since the 1990s. The BSU believes that university authorities, with the support of the government, intentionally make student bodies dysfunctional in order to implement various neoliberal policies in the universities. The BSU also believes that the teachers' community in the public universities are working in favour of the commercialisation of higher education in Bangladesh. As Hasan said, "Teachers in public universities are involved in private universities. They are teaching in the private universities. Often a teacher is teaching in

various private universities and is involved in consultancies which hamper academic activities in his own university". Because of their various involvements teachers cannot manage time for their institution. Sometimes they are scared of the students' resistance in the universities and thus try to hamper the student resistance in order to preserve their own self interest. As Hasan said:

They cannot manage time to teach in their own institution and do not conduct any research activity. This is a common phenomenon in the academic world in Bangladesh ... We did not get support from the teachers' community when we organised a resistance. In most of the cases they even tried to prevent us. In fact when a department introduced a night shift or tuition fees few teachers protested that decision.

6.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have explored the structural consequences of neoliberalism in higher education as recounted by participants and media reports. I reported the participants' perceptions, using direct quotes, and used media reports and critical analysis of the literature in order to examine the impact of the neoliberal policy agenda in the higher education sector in Bangladesh. A key implication of the chapter as a whole is that neoliberal hegemony has brought radical changes to the higher education sector in Bangladesh.

In the final chapter I further examine the key themes that arise from this study, draw some overall conclusions and explore the implication of neoliberal policy for the future of the higher education sector and society in Bangladesh.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter I sum up the outcomes of the research. It is structured into four sections: summary of the preceding discussion, future trends in higher education, overarching implication, and implications for policy and practices and opportunities for further research. In the first section, I present six key concepts that emerge from the participants' observations in alignment with the literature. In the second section, I identify six key points that appear to indicate the future direction in higher education as a result of the impact of neoliberalism on this sector. These are then drawn together in an overarching statement of implication for the future of society in Bangladesh. Finally, I examine the implications of this research for policy and practice and indicate areas for further research.

7.2 Summary of the Discussion

The neoliberal shift in the higher education sector in Bangladesh explicitly changes the overall socio-cultural, political and economical patterns of society. Not only are philosophical and pedagogical aspects of higher education changed through the neoliberal policy agenda, but higher education also becomes a most expensive commodity in contemporary Bangladesh. A first step towards the implementation of the neoliberal policy agenda has been the introduction of private universities.

Private universities have evolved with an underlying notion of privatisation of higher education and provide places to a large amount of students.

Private universities are established with the support of businessmen. Therefore investment in the private universities is often treated as a business venture in which the owners' intention is to maximise profits. Private universities develop their curriculum content in relation to the demands of global markets and offer degrees in business and

technology related subjects. Most of the private universities are located in one or two floors of buildings in commercial areas where they do not have adequate space for sports grounds and other facilities usually deemed necessary for a university. Thus private universities in Bangladesh are increasing, but they do not maintain an educational environment conducive to student life.

However, private universities are playing a significant role in producing graduate in Bangladesh. Today, the number of student enrolments in the private universities is greater than that in public universities¹² (University Grant Commission, 2009). As several participants point that previously, a large number of students enrolled in various universities, particularly in Indian colleges, resulting in loss of foreign exchange. Private universities attract upper and upper-middle class students and reduce the import from abroad of higher education which helps to preserve the country's foreign exchange.

The process of marketisation of higher education leads to a vocationalisation of higher education.

Private universities simplify the goals of higher education. They emphasise technical and business related knowledge rather than a broad knowledge of society. For example, knowledge of history and philosophy is given little value in private universities. In this sense they provide training for students in specific subjects, but fail to generate general knowledge to ensure educational quality. A process of vocationalising higher education is unlikely to develop a democratic society. A democratic society requires true and critical knowledge for its social institutions to flourish (Nussbaum, 2010). If Bangladesh wants to develop as a democratic society, it is impossible to do so through vocational knowledge alone; the country needs an abstract general curriculum and critical knowledge. But the current generation is growing up without knowing national and international politics, history and their development. Sometimes they know of some

¹² Excluding student enrolments at the National University and the Open University as these universities do not directly provide higher education. The National University offers degrees through various public and private colleges and they support the colleges with academic facilities, such as developing curriculum and content, arranging examinations, providing degrees. Similarly, the Open University offers degrees through distance learning.

historical event, but they are growing up without knowledge of the implications and of critical perspectives.

Private universities are increasingly becoming a symbol and a mechanism of the power elite's involvement in the higher education sector and help to reduce state responsibility for the higher education sector.

Education in the private sector is not new in Bangladesh. During the medieval period and even in the British period, many philanthropists established educational institutions, for example Jagannath College, Mymansingha Ananda Mohan College, Sylhet Murari Chand College¹³, with a view to serve society rather than as business propositions. These colleges gained reputations as the best colleges in terms of ensuring quality of education. They developed education systems based on societal needs, norms and values. Most of the colleges were nationalised because they provided quality higher education. Every greater district in Bangladesh had such large and famous colleges offering higher education. However no initiatives were taken by successive governments to expand higher education through these colleges. If a government had taken the initiative to expand higher education through these colleges then the higher educational institutes would not only have been decentralised, attracting rural students easily, but also there would have been no need for large private universities. In order to avoid responsibility for higher education of the people generally and to promote private universities the government did not take measures to sustain and develop these colleges¹⁴.

The neoliberal policy agenda in the higher education sector constitutes an effective tool to "manufacture consent"¹⁵ among various stakeholders.

¹³ Mymanshingh Ananda Mohan College was established by Ananda Mohan Bose in 1883, and Sylhet MC College was established by the local nobleman, Raja Girish Chandra Roy, in 1892.

¹⁴ About one million students are studying in more than 1600 colleges/institutions, which are located in different districts in Bangladesh, affiliated to the National University.

¹⁵ I use Herman and Chomsky's concept of 'manufacturing consent'. They offered a "Propaganda Model" - based on five factors that explains how money and power in the US filter the news that goes to print in

Public universities, like private universities, have transformed their education systems in line with the trends and demands of the market during the late 90s. The primary initiative was carried out through introducing a self-financed executive MBA programme at the business faculty at the University of Dhaka. Later many market-oriented departments of major public universities introduced evening courses in order to reduce financial crises. A recent development in higher education, the introduction of the 'Strategic Plan for Higher Education' (SPHE) by the University Grant Commission (UGC) rapidly moves the agenda of neoliberalism forward. The historical, social and cultural contexts of the country were not considered in formulating this development. Significant aspects of the neoliberal policy agenda are addressed through the SPHE. It has shaped the current notion of higher education and has promoted an economy based society that relies on superficial knowledge. Ethical, logical, and indigenous ways of critical thinking have been bypassed whereas a commodity-centric mentality is being engendered in the future generation. As a result, students are neither motivated intrinsically nor they are extrinsically led to develop deeper analytical thinking. Commercially-based higher education encourages students to be self-centered, and to ignore democratic practice in society. "When tertiary education is defined purely as a form of (self-interested) private investment, goals such as promoting a love of learning, fostering public debate, and enhancing democratic citizenship disappear from the agenda" (Roberts, 1999, p. 80).

The notion of 'academic entrepreneur' contributes to the development of discriminatory attitudes between students, and between teachers.

Teachers of market-oriented disciplines have opportunities to earn more money by involvement in various activities, such as conducting evening courses, or teaching part-

mass-media. They argued that the "important branches of the media such as movies and books have had substantial global markets for many years, but only in the past two decades has a global media system come into being that is having major effects on media systems, culture, and politics. It has been fueled by the globalization of business more generally, the associated rapid growth of global advertising, improved communications technology that has facilitated cross-border operations and control. It has also been helped along by government policy and consolidation of neoliberal ideology" (Herman and Chomsky, 2002, p. xiv).

time classes in private universities. Often business and technology oriented subject teachers undermine the broader scope of subjects. Similarly, students of business and technology related subjects develop a notion of hierarchy. The public believes that business and technology subjects are demanded by the market, and will thus ensure good jobs and salaries for graduates. Often parents and families pressure their children to pursue degrees in these subject areas. Such subject reification has colonised society; business and technology related subjects are labeled by society as the best to secure good jobs. As job markets are saturated, market-oriented graduates are often either unemployed or have to work in other fields.

The neoliberal policy shift within higher education sector leads to large-scale violence in higher education institutions.

Some left-leaning students' organisations and civil society bodies organise resistance to the neoliberal policy agenda in the higher education sector. Their action appears as a form of "counter-hegemony"¹⁶ in which they challenge the hegemonic character of neoliberalism in the higher education sector. Their resistance is successful to some extent, but not enough for entirely curtailing the neoliberal policy agenda in the higher education sector. The numbers of activists are low, but they have strong commitment to changing the higher education system. Resistance which is organised in the higher education sector contributes a little social change. Based on socialist political ideology activists organise the student community. As part of the resistance to the neoliberal policy agenda, they organise student protest rallies, sit-ins, *gheraos*, hunger strikes, campus strikes, seminars, and symposia. Often their resistance is unsuccessful due to the power elite's intervention. The power elite use violent measures against them, and the ruling student front hinders their resistance through continuing threats and assaults. The activists in these organisations face police cases and suspension from the university. They rarely receive support from the teachers' community to organise resistance. As an apolitical attitude has developed in the student community, many

¹⁶ I use Gramsci's concept of 'counter hegemony' (See Gramsci, A. 2007. *Prison Notebooks*, edited by Joseph A. Butigeig; translated by Joseph A. Butigeig & Antonio Callari for details).

students are generally disinterested in student politics. Overall student politics are regarded as bad, so student organisations struggle to get general student support in resistance to the neoliberal policy agenda.

7.3 Future Trends in Higher Education

Six probable future trends in higher education are discussed that are consequences of the neoliberal shift. First, government support will be increasingly reduced, leading to the establishment of joint venture programmes in the public universities. In the last twenty years government financial support for research in public universities has dried up steadily. Public universities' activities have expanded, but government support has not increased comparatively. Today, at least 80% of total expenditure of a public university, for example the University of Dhaka, is spent on staff salaries (University Grant Commission, 2009; Droho, 2010). Therefore public universities are always falling into financial crises. Such financial crises will create double burdens for the universities: squeezing the scope of research, and driving higher education toward a market-oriented approach. To meet that financial pressure, universities in future will try to make joint initiatives with various market-oriented forces to increase their internal financial capacity. They will introduce different new degree programmes with the financial support of international financial institutions, and of government and non-government sectors. For example, the M.A. in disaster management programme under the department of sociology at the University of Dhaka was introduced with financial assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Ministry of Disaster Preparedness.

Second, higher education will increasingly reflect an epistemology of the rich class. As the policy makers make a distinction between 'literacy' and 'education', it is decided that the mass of people need 'literacy' rather than 'education' in order to acquire the skills, often known as 'human development', necessary for capitalist society. Such a depoliticised and pro-bourgeois higher education system produces graduates to meet

the demands of the global market, and at the same time produces a depoliticised character in the students. The critical insight of students is diminished, helping establish the prevailing capitalist ideology in society. Therefore, future higher education will be reflected as a quest for knowledge of capitalist ideology.

Third, the outcome of the neoliberal project will be that public higher education will become more expensive, with costs increasingly carried by the private individual in accordance with the 'user pays' principle. Now students from poor families have no access to private universities due to high tuition fees, and 50% of the people in Bangladesh are living under the poverty line (United Nations Development Programme, 2009). Even students from middle class and upper middle class families are struggling to manage the high tuition fees for their education in the private universities. Therefore, public universities were seen as the only place where students from poor families have access. However the tuition fees of public universities have increased in recent years, steadily reducing the number of students from poor families who gain access to higher education. At the same time the government establishes more public universities on the private university model and pushes public universities to internally provide substantial portions of their budgets. Such a tendency of increasing tuition fees in public universities will create burdens for lower income groups, and thus public universities will not be places for students who belong to poor families.

Fourth, a commercial mentality will grow within the teaching community. Many teachers in public universities are forced to be involved in the private universities, commercial consultancy or research firms, and even in investing money in the stock markets to augment their low salaries. They spend a significant number of hours a day on these activities, hampering their normal duty in the public universities (University Grant Commission, 2009; Droho, 2010). Sometimes teachers in both public and private universities treat higher education as an instrument of business rather than as a commitment to generate true knowledge for the benefit of society. Such a trend reflects

an emerging commercial mentality on the part of teachers in the universities in Bangladesh that may well affect the entire teaching community in the future.

Fifth, universities will no longer be seen as public spaces for the protection and development of democratic values. The SPHE proposed a set of administrative reforms for public universities which reflect a tendency to ignore the basic character of the public university that has been practiced for over a hundred years in public universities in Bangladesh. Social and democratic practices among faculty members, students, and the administration have been regarded as the fundamental basis of higher education, considering teachers and students as senior and junior scholars respectively. Such a focus helped to develop critical thinking and contributed to building a conscious society that, in fact, developed a new outlook for the nation. The proposed new administrative system in the public universities in Bangladesh will further extend the commercialisation of higher education, where education will be treated as a commodity, and so will hinder the democratic practice. Similarly, as the board of trustees keeps absolute power of control over private universities, that will impede the academic freedom of faculty members.

Sixth, there is likelihood of increasing student resentment and active resistance. The adoption of neoliberal policy by public universities, evident in increasing tuition fees, prompted student resistance in many universities. Often the resistance was accompanied by violence because of the brutal measures carried out by the government and university authorities. Ongoing non-violent resistance is likely to turn into violent resistance in the future. Therefore 'militant resistance' will increase on the university campuses, unless the neoliberal policy agenda in the higher education sector is critically analysed.

Putting all these strands together, the neoliberalisation of higher education poses a serious threat to ensuring social justice.

7.4 Overarching Implication

Drawing on the critical insight of Martha Nussbaum (2010) in *Not for Profit: why democracy needs the humanities*, I offer an understanding of the overarching implication of neoliberal policy in the higher education sector for the future of society in Bangladesh. There have been radical changes in the higher education sector as a consequence of the neoliberal policy agenda. Based on neoliberal ideology, the humanities, arts, and social science knowledge have been ignored and Bangladesh has adopted market-oriented knowledge as the norm for the higher education sector. The young generation is being taught how to maximise profit, while ignoring the skills that are needed to function effectively in a democracy. If such a system continues, higher education will produce useful machines rather than citizens who can think critically about themselves, traditions, social values and norms, and about the suffering and achievement of others. Profit motivated higher education is shrinking the critical insight of the young generation. While it is important not to ignore the need for good science, business and technology related knowledge, it is also crucial that the coming generation develops skills of critical thinking for democracy to flourish. In order to keep democracy alive, Bangladesh needs to generate critical thinking and reflection, and to expand knowledge about a wide range of cultures and nations in the context of the global economy. People need to think about the history of many nations and different forms of group interaction in order to enable democracies to deal with the problems that Bangladesh is facing in the interdependent world. The country needs to enhance people's ability to generate ideas and think creatively. It should be remembered that educated citizens make democracy sustainable. The present generation requires a breadth of interpretative skills as well as factual knowledge that can be ensured through humanities, arts, and social science education (Nussbaum, 2010).

7.5 Implications for Policy and Practice, and Opportunity for Further Research

A critique of the uncritical use of neoliberal policy in higher education may, I hope, serve to inform and challenge key policy-makers, particularly the authority that manages higher education in Bangladesh, the University Grant Commission. Market friendly policies need to be put into perspective to understand their overarching implications, keeping in mind the socioeconomic and political contexts of each particular country. I have examined a variety of perspectives from different actors involved in the higher education sector in order to provide a broad-based evaluation of the current trends in higher education. This evaluation highlights issues that need to be critically considered by policy-makers.

The neoliberal policy model in higher education should not be adopted blindly. An uncritical adoption of neoliberal policy might not be productive. It must be critically analysed, keeping in mind the complexity of a particular country's socioeconomic and political context. My analysis suggests that the policy-makers are not considering the socioeconomic context before adopting a policy, for example the "Strategic Plan for Higher Education" (SPHE), the Private University Act, and the "Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project" (HEQEP). A 'top-down' approach characterised these policies and thus these policies were highly centralised and highly bureaucratic. No democratic consultation with the key stakeholders such as students, community, faculties, was carried out during the formulation of these policies. Therefore the whole higher education sector is operating without a real vision for the young generation.

My whole analysis also suggests that higher education policies suffer from a 'democratic deficit'. A broad-based democratic practice needs to be introduced into the higher education sector. The notion of 'educational democracy'¹⁷ needs to be insisted upon in the higher education sector in order to sustain democratic values in society. Therefore, focus would be needed on the policy, governance, institutional leadership, critical

¹⁷ I use Fields & Feinberg's concept of 'educational democracy' (See Marginson, 2006b for details).

curricula and pedagogy of higher education. By ensuring democratic and critical perspectives in all of these we can reverse the course of market fundamentalism in higher education in Bangladesh. Democratic practices in higher education inevitably reduce market fundamentalism in the sector.

There is a relationship between the growth of private universities and the decrease of higher education through public universities. The state's responsibility to higher education is reduced through the rapid growth of private universities. The present policy framework leads to a considerable the level of educational inequality. The manifestation of privatisation in higher education threatens social justice in society, as privatisation enhances the process of exclusion from higher education of students belonging to middle and low income groups.

Further research is needed to explore the dimension of education inequality keeping in mind the interrelations of neoliberalism, higher education, and social justice in Bangladesh. Such research might involve further inquiry into how the privatisation in the higher education sector engenders an unjust society in Bangladesh. In this regard I plan a further grounded study of four universities, two public and two private, in which a neoliberal policy model has been introduced, in order to explore both the impact on social justice and the ways in which committed teachers navigate the conflicting pressures of neoliberal policy and the desire to teach so as to develop broad-based knowledge and critical skills within their students.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Checklist for the University Grant Commission and Government Official

Name:

Address:

Age:

Sex:

Education:

Working experiences:

Could you, please, tell me about the current higher education system in Bangladesh?

Why do you think that the current higher education system is useful for the graduates and for the country?

Often the University Grant Commission emphasises the production of market and technical oriented knowledge - why?

Since the 1990s, some major policy changes have been carried out the higher education sector, such as the promulgated Private University Act 1992, the Strategic Plan for Higher Education 2006-2026, could you tell me about the context of incorporating these policies?

Could you, please, make clear why it was necessary to incorporate such policies in the higher education sector?

Recently the government took a loan from international financial institutions (IFIs), such as tk. 6910 millions under "Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project" (HEQEP)

from World Bank, could you tell me about the background of the HEQEP and why the government took such a decision?

Do you think that the IFIs' involvement in the higher education sector will help this sector?

Recently, the government has repealed the Private University Act 1992 and has promulgated a new Private University Act 2010. Can you, please, explain the reasons behind it?

Often both public and private universities are accused of not maintaining quality education. What do you think in this regard?

In your opinion, how can a university manage their financial matters?

Appendix 2: Interview Checklist for Owners of the Private Universities

Name:

Address:

Age:

Sex:

Education:

Working experiences:

Would you tell me about the background of your university?

What are the missions and visions of your university?

May I know your future plan of this university?

Could you tell me about the background of the private universities in Bangladesh?

When and why did you realise that private universities should start in the country?

What types of support did you receive from the government or anywhere else?

What types of graduates do you want to produce from your university?

In the most cases private universities offer degrees in market related subjects, why?

Often it is alleged that the private university education is expensive, why?

What do your opinion on the latest Private University Act 2010?

How will the latest Private University Act 2010 help to expand private university activities in future?

Appendix 3: Interview Checklist for Politicians and Student Activists

Name:

Address:

Age:

Sex:

Education:

Working experiences:

Questions for all participants

What is your major concern for the current higher education system in Bangladesh?

Meanwhile different policies have been formulated in the higher education sector. Could you tell me of your/party's political stand with these policies?

Is there any political or business reason behind this?

Why do you think these policies were necessary or unnecessary for the higher education sector?

In your opinion, what ideology should be generated in the graduates through higher education?

Do you/your party have any future plan regarding the higher education sector?

Questions for students' activists

Do you believe that the universities are transformed in relation with market-driven forces?

Why do you/your organisation organise resistance to higher education policies?

What are the strategies being adopted in resistance programme?

Is there any ideology behind resistance?

Did you get support from students, teachers, and communities to organise resistance?

Appendix 4: Interview Checklist for Education Expert, Sociologists, and Public and Private University Authorities and Faculty Members

Name:

Address:

Age:

Sex:

Education:

Working experiences:

Questions for all participants

What is your major concern for the current higher education system in Bangladesh?

Have you noticed any basic change made in the higher education sector?

Since the 1990s, enormous changes, such as Private University Act, "Strategic Plan for Higher Education 2006-2026", have been made in higher education sector. What is your opinion of these policy changes?

What is your opinion of the involvement of international financial institutions in the higher education sector in Bangladesh?

Do you think that higher education is market oriented now?

Do you think that the current higher education system is politically motivated?

What is the impact of these policies on the students and society?

In your opinion what type of higher education should be ensured for graduates?

In your opinion what type of education do students want from the universities?

Questions for public and private university authorities and faculty members

Could you, please, tell me about the reasons to open evening courses?

What degrees are offered through evening courses?

In your opinion, how can a university or a department manage their financial matters?

How do you evaluate the University Grant Commission and the government role in the higher education sector in Bangladesh?

What type of higher education do you want to ensure for the graduates?

How do you practice academic freedom in your institutions?

Appendix 5: Interview Checklist for Public and Private University Students

Name:

Address:

Age:

Sex:

Education:

Working experiences:

Could you tell me about your current student status?

Why do you study in this subject?

Is this your expected subject?

Is anyone influenced you to take this subject?

Do you think that this higher education is useful for you?

Why do you think that this higher education is useful for you?

What do you want to be in your future life?

Do you think your higher education will help you to build your future plan?

What do you think about the current higher education system?

Do you notice any student/political activities in your university?

Do you believe in any political ideology?

Have you ever been participated in any student movement?

Appendix 6: Information Letter

Phone: +8801711192220 or +64226206949

Email: mak107@uclive.ac.nz

Date:

Dear (name of participant)

The politics of Neoliberalism in the Higher Education Sector in Bangladesh

I am Md. Ariful Haq Kabir, a post graduate student at University of Canterbury, New Zealand and lecturer at the Institute of Education and Research at University of Dhaka, Bangladesh. The purpose of the research, which I am conducting as part of my M.Ed. degree, is to explore the historical context of international economic and political influences on the higher education sector in Bangladesh. Further, the research explores how the demands of the market shape the nature of higher education.

I would like to ask you to let me interview you. I am interested in understanding your experiences and perspectives on the issue. Your participation is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the project at any time. If you choose to withdraw, I will use my best endeavours to remove any of the information relating to you from the project, including any final publication, provided that this remains practically achievable.

The interview will take about an hour at a time and place that suits you. After the interview I will transcribe the interview. If at any time you feel uncomfortable, please feel free to stop the interview. We can arrange to do the interview at another time. I will use a pseudonym for your name and will maintain your anonymity, and the anonymity of your institution. I can also assure you of the confidentiality of the raw data. Such data will be securely stored in password protected facilities and/or locked storage at the University of Canterbury for five years following the study and it will then be destroyed.

The information will be used for academic purposes: thesis writing and publication of articles. The summary of the research findings will be sent by email to you.

If you have any question about this interview, please do not hesitate to contact me or my principal supervisor, Professor Dr. Janinka Greenwood, phone +64 3 345 8390, email: janinka.greenwood@canterbury.ac.nz. You are also advised to contact Professor Salma Akhter, Director, Institute of Education and Research, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh, phone: 880-2-9661900- 8200, email: salma.akhter@hotmail.com, if you have further queries about the study.

If you agree to participate in this study, please complete and sign the attached consent form and return it to me in the envelope provided by 7th November 2010.

Thank you in advance for your contribution.

Yours sincerely,

Md. Ariful Haq Kabir

(Note: This study has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee and if you have any queries you may contact to The Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch, Email: human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz.)

Appendix 7: Consent Form of Participant

Tel:

Email:

The Politics of Neoliberalism in the Higher Education Sector in Bangladesh

Declaration of Consent to Participate

I have read and understood the information provided about this research project.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time prior to publication of the findings.

I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and that any published or reported results will not identify me or my institution.

I understand that a pseudonym will be used for me and will maintain anonymity. I understand, too, that confidentiality of the raw data is guaranteed. Such data will be securely stored in password protected facilities and/or locked storage at the University of Canterbury for five years following the study and it will then be destroyed.

I also understand that a summary of the findings of this research will be sent through my email.

By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project.

Name:

Institution:

Date:

Signature:

Email address for report on study:

(Note: email confirmation will be sent on receipt of your interview)

Please return this completed consent form to Md. Ariful Haq Kabir, Lecturer, Institute of Education, University of Dhaka, Post Box: 1000, Bangladesh in the envelope provided by 7th November 2010.

Thank you for your contribution to this study.